

MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

Newsletter of the Museum Archives Roundtable, Society of American Archivists
September 1988

Volume 2 Number 2

MUSEUM ARCHIVISTS TO HOST SPECIAL MEETINGS AND SESSIONS AT ANNUAL SAA GATHERING

This year's annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists is being held September 29 - October 2 in Atlanta, Georgia. The Westin Peachtree Hotel will serve as annual meeting headquarters. Outlined below are the meetings, sessions, and activities which should be of interest to museum archivists. All conference participants are encouraged to attend. Those who are unable to attend the 1988 meeting but who would like more details on museum archives activities at the conference may contact Roundtable Coordinator Mary Elizabeth Ruwell.

Museum Archives Roundtable Meeting

Thursday, 9/29 from 11:15 am to 12:45 pm
The meeting will include several short presentations on innovative museum projects and an SAA Committee on Goals & Priorities (CGAP) presentation by a member of that committee. Roundtable business will be conducted, including the elections of a new coordinator and newsletter editor.

Presidential Reception

Thursday, 9/29 from 6 to 8:30 pm
Held at the High Museum of Art, a perfect place for Museum Archivists to gather and chat informally.

A Common Agenda? Archives, Museums, and Historical Societies

Saturday, 10/1 from 3:15 to 5:15 pm
Archives, museums, and historical societies are organizations with common purposes: to collect, preserve, and educate. What each does affects the others, yet priorities differ. This session will examine these differences and similarities and will report on various developments in the museum field that will significantly affect archives. Included among the topics discussed will be: museum and archives priorities in such areas as computerization, collection management, exhibition and information retrieval; the relationship of the American Association for State and Local History to archives, and the possible implications for archives of a shared computer database designed for history museums; and the accomplishments of the

American Association of Museums' Accreditation Commission in incorporating archival concerns into its evaluation process.

Participants include: Kristine Haglund (chair), Denver Museum of Natural History; J. Stephen Catlett, Greensboro Historical Museum - "Reflections on Related Professions"; Larry Tise, American Association for State and Local History - "AASLH and Archives"; and Pat Williams, American Association of Museums' Accreditation Commission - "AAM and Archives".

Museum Archives Roundtable Open House

Sunday 10/2, from 8 to 8:45 am
Any unfinished Roundtable business or discussion of new initiatives may be conducted at this time. The Open House will be chaired by the newly-elected Roundtable Coordinator.

Museums as Cultural Institutions: The Roles They Play in Developing or Continuing Cultural Trends, and the Archives They Maintain

Sunday 10/2, from 9 to 11 am
As cultural institutions, museums interact with their surrounding community in developing or furthering cultural trends. As a result, the records they create are more than just policy-making documents that show how museums operate. Using museum and other institutional records, these presentations will document the trends museums have experienced in the past, and at the present time, linking them with other institutions in defining and interpreting American culture. The importance of having museums maintain their records and develop archival programs will be discussed within this context.

Participants include: Alan Bain (chair), Smithsonian Institution Archives; Peter C. Marzio, Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston - "A Permanent Legacy: Archives in the Life of a Museum"; Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Syracuse University - "Making Connections: The Museum Network in Urban Culture"; and Robert W. Rydell, Montana University - "The Strange Story of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum".

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK
AN AGENDA FOR MUSEUM ARCHIVES: THE BELMONT CONFERENCE AND BEYOND

Next year marks the tenth anniversary of what has become known among museum archivists as the Belmont Conference. The Conference's upcoming anniversary not only serves as a timely reminder of past accomplishments, but also should encourage us to establish a museum archives agenda for the next decade and beyond.

The 1979 Belmont Conference heralded the beginning of an important growth period in museum archives programs, one which we continue to experience today. A handful of museums had established institutional archives during the 1970s, but Belmont brought national and professional attention to museum archives for the first time. This meeting, together with the fortuitous financial support of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), marked the beginning of an unprecedented era of interest in and development of museum archives.

Conference details remain largely unknown to those who did not attend. Many of us, including myself, were not professional archivists at the time. Twenty two participants from eighteen repositories in the U.S. and Canada attended the meeting in December 1979. The meeting was held at the Smithsonian Institution's Belmont Conference Center in Elkridge, Maryland - hence its name. The gathering was funded through the Smithsonian's Educational Outreach Program and was organized by the Archives of American Art. Ten years later, both repositories remain strong supporters of museum archives programs.

The Conference produced some important and tangible results. Participants created a set of guidelines for establishing museum archives which were then produced in brochure form and distributed to hundreds of museums. More importantly, the Conference generated enthusiasm and an atmosphere of community among museum archivists which was previously lacking. This sense of community and purpose led to the creation of the SAA Museum Archives Task Force in 1980, the precursor of the Museum Archives Roundtable.

The Task Force acted as gatherer and disseminator of information on museum archives programs from 1980-1986. The group produced a list of specific goals toward which it was to work. Its actions resulted in two important products: 1) a 1983 survey of museum archives programs and 2) an Information Packet on museum archives which the Task Force issued in 1984. The groups' last action was the creation of the Museum Archives Roundtable in 1986. (A more complete history of the Task Force appears in the December 1986 issue of Museum Archivist.)

What course have museum archivists embarked on since the formation of the Roundtable? Better and continued communication were vital concerns and led to the creation of Museum Archivist, now in its third year of publication. The newsletter acts as a forum for the exchange of ideas and common concerns, and its mailing list is evidence of the great

expansion in museum archives programs in the past decade. In addition, the Roundtable has sponsored sessions at SAA meetings and will do so again this year. These sessions provide museum archivists with additional opportunities for exploring issues specific to their needs and experiences - a more focused form of communication.

But is communicating among ourselves, and with other archival and non-archival groups an agenda for action? Can annual meeting sessions and a biannual newsletter determine direction and focus? Perhaps we have taken SAA's definition of a roundtable too literally and regard loose structure and informal rules of procedure as mandates in themselves.

We can certainly continue with a narrow course and focus the group's energy on the more limited avenues of newsletter production and session sponsorship. Both are necessary and important products and must continue. But can we not also build on the enthusiasm generated ten years ago at Belmont and direct our efforts toward more substantive endeavors? Shouldn't we move beyond familiar territory and engage ourselves in more vital concerns?

A clear definition of Roundtable goals and objectives is in order. This should be accompanied by an outline of specific activities through which our organization can achieve these aims. Our group should consider establishing committees to carry out these actions and monitor and report progress, with the Roundtable Coordinator in overall charge. Such work is crucial if we are to continue to mature as a productive force.

We agree that our museum archives community is important to us, to the institutions we serve, and to the archives profession. Let's act on that belief and continue the work begun a decade ago.

Museum Archivist is issued twice a year by the Museum Archives Roundtable of SAA. News items, letters to the editor, and comments from the archives community are welcome. Contact the Editor, Museum Archivist, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, P.O. Box 6826, Houston, TX 77265.

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Theresa Percy, Old Sturbridge Village
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Deborah Wythe, The Brooklyn Museum

WASHINGTON'S FREER GALLERY OF ART ESTABLISHES ARCHIVES

The Freer Gallery of Art, which opened to the public in 1923, was a gift to the nation from the Detroit businessman Charles Lang Freer (1856-1919). The museum's holdings include an eclectic combination of Oriental and American art reflecting Freer's inspired connoisseurship. The collector was a close friend of the artist James A. McNeill Whistler, who in the 1890s impressed upon Freer the importance of extensive study in Oriental arts and civilization. As Freer collected works from the Orient, he also acquired turn-of-the-century American paintings whose delicacy he perceived as a suitable complement to his Oriental holdings.

Adjacent to and complementing the Freer Gallery of Art stands the Smithsonian Institution's newest museum, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. The Sackler Gallery's growing collection of Asian art is founded on a gift of one thousand masterworks given by the late medical researcher, publisher, and art collector Dr. Arthur M. Sackler (1913-1987). These two museums share one administration under the auspices of the Smithsonian and form a unique center for the study of Asian and American art.

The museums recently created an Archives Department which is overseen by a full-time archivist. Under the administration of the Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Library, the Archives' primary mission is to collect and preserve documentary materials that support the holdings of the two Galleries. In addition to the early records of the Freer Gallery, archival holdings include the personal papers of Charles Lang Freer. Mr. Freer's papers feature letterpress books containing over fifteen thousand copies of letters and more than five thousand handwritten letters with correspondents such as James A. McNeill Whistler, Thomas Dewing, Dwight Tryon, Abbott Handerson Thayer, Gari Melchers, Frederick S. Church, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Theodore Roosevelt, Grover Cleveland, and Alexander Graham Bell. The papers also contain photographs from the Freer estate, construction photographs of the Freer Gallery of Art, invoices of purchases made by Freer, diaries, and scrapbooks of newspaper clippings.

Extensive Manuscripts Holdings

The Archives also houses several major manuscript collections. The papers of Ernest Herzfeld (1879-1948) feature field notebooks, drawings, negatives, and photographs which document Near Eastern archaeology. The Myron Bement Smith Collection comprises approximately eighty-seven thousand items on Islamic art and archaeology assembled by Smith (1897-1970) during his forty-year career as an archaeologist, architect, and historian. Records of Freer staff member, Carl Whiting Bishop (1881-1942) contain primarily photographs and written observations documenting his travels and expeditions to China from 1923-27 and 1929-34. The Archives also houses

extremely rare glass plate negatives depicting the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), the mother of Emperor Tongzhi of the Qing dynasty of China.

As a newly formed Archives it will take several years to arrange, catalog, and preserve the present collections. A priority project is underway to arrange and catalog the architectural records of the Freer Gallery of Art to accommodate a three-year museum construction phase. The Freer Gallery will be closed to the public during construction. Future plans for the Archives include the automation of its cataloging system through participation in the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) database, and the conversion of approximately ten thousand nitrate negatives to safety film.

For more information on the Archives and its holdings contact Archivist Hennessey, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 1050 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20560.

Colleen Hennessey
Freer Gallery/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

ON-LINE ACCESSION SYSTEM IN USE AT SMITHSONIAN ARCHIVES

The Smithsonian Institution Archives has developed an on-line accession system for records and manuscript collections using the programming language and functions provided by dBaseIII Plus. The purpose of the system is to maintain the format and structure of the existing Archives' manual report while enhancing its data manipulation and retrieval capabilities. Keyword searches are available for such data fields as donor, title and any index term entered from the descriptive entry. Over 700 accessions currently reside in the database. Retroactive data entry will continue while the system is being Beta tested, and before the system is used by staff to directly input accession information.

The system presently resides on an IBM PS2/60. Documentation to the program has been written and a user's procedures manual for entering and retrieving information is in draft form. Persons interested in receiving a copy of the system after the user manual is completed should write to Alan Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Institution, A & I Building, Room 2135, Washington, D.C. 20560.

Information Wanted: The Dewitt Historical Society is looking for information on Jefferson Beardsley, a 19th-century artist and photographer from upstate New York. Information on Beardsley's studio equipment, family papers, and location of any remaining artwork would be much appreciated. Call Shannon O'Dell at (607) 273-8284 or write the Dewitt Historical Society, 116 N. Cayuga Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

**MUSEUM ARCHIVES HOT TOPIC
AT ANNUAL AAM MEETING**

On June 6, the American Association of Museums (AAM) held a seminar focusing on museum archives at its annual convention in Pittsburgh. The session was entitled "Museum Memory Banks: How a Museum Archives Can Protect Your Museum." Patricia Williams, Director of Accreditation for AAM, organized and chaired the session. Williams spoke briefly about AAM's continuing concern with the protection and retention of museum records. While there are only two questions concerning formal archival programs in the AAM Museum Self-Study, Williams stressed that throughout the accreditation process the AAM examines the ability of each museum to preserve and retrieve its institutional records.

Herbert Riband, a Philadelphia attorney who serves on the Board of Trustees of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, was the first of three speakers on the panel. Riband discussed his experiences with museum legal issues, describing the vital role archival materials play in court cases involving museums. Legal title to objects, bequests, building plans, contracts, financial materials, and loan agreements are among the types of records most often needed in matters of litigation. As a result of this need for clear documentation of museum acquisitions and operations, Riband stressed that efficient systems for records collection, preservation, and retrieval are fundamental for the legal protection of museums.

Laurie Baty, Grants Analyst at the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), made a second presentation. Baty briefly outlined possible federal funding sources for museum archives projects, including NEA, NEH, IMS, and the U.S. Department of Education. She also described in more detail how the NHPRC funding process works, explaining the deadlines and requirements for funding requests for museum archives development projects. The NHPRC has been the major funding agency for museum archives, providing over \$883,000 to 26 museums since 1978.

Maureen Melton, Project Archivist at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was the final speaker. Melton offered an overview of the general types of records created in museums, and procedures for collecting, appraising, arranging, and describing those records. She outlined the progress and future plans of the MFA's archives project, which is in the first year of a two-year NHPRC project grant.

As a result of the enthusiastic response by those who attended the session, Pat Williams is organizing another session concerning museum archives to be held at the June 1989 AAM convention in New Orleans. The proposed topic of the session is museums as collectors of archival and manuscript materials. Anyone interested should write to Williams at the AAM, 1225 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Maureen Melton
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**FLOOD DOESN'T SLOW ACTIVITIES
AT NY ZOO SOCIETY ARCHIVES**

Fiscal year 1987-88 began with a splash on Sunday morning, July 5 (1987), when the archives endured its worst flood since moving to its present quarters in 1979. Fortunately, the building switchboard operator alerted the archivist to rising water early Sunday morning. By mid-afternoon, the two person salvage team completed operations, with negligible losses to the archives and minor losses to collections of the associated library. The ankle-deep flooding apparently was caused by inadequate building drainage and summer rains.

Access to the archives was more seriously impeded by construction associated with the zoo's energy co-generation project. The co-generation pipelines will eventually connect all buildings in the zoo. In order to access an adjacent boiler room, construction crews penetrated exterior and interior walls of the archives, displacing a collection of paintings and the institutional author's collection. Preparing for the construction work entailed extensive shifting of collections and draping most of the stacks in plastic for protection from drilling dust and construction-related damage.

Archives Assists with Film

The archives supported two major in-house historical projects during the past year: production of a twenty minute motion picture depicting ninety years of wildlife conservation activity by the New York Zoological Society and a detailed chronology of that history. The film was shown at the annual members' meeting of the Society at Lincoln Center in February 1988. The history film will eventually be shown as a long term exhibit in the wildlife conservation room at the new Central Park Zoo. The archivist received screen credit for participation in the film project. The chronology will be used by the staff of Wildlife Conservation International to support its programs.

In March the library and archives received word of a NY State Discretionary Preservation grant of \$3,429. The grant will pay for a ten drawer oversize flat filing cabinet, a hygrothermograph, and a site survey by the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

Accessions during fiscal year 1987-88 included records of the late Dr. George Ruggieri, S.J. (1925-1987), director of the Osborn Laboratories of the Marine Sciences and New York Aquarium from 1972-1987.

In the final quarter of the year, planning for new quarters accelerated with the announcement that the zoo's old Bird House, which closed in 1972, would be renovated as office space. Preliminary plans call for the archives and the associated library to move to environmentally-controlled, above ground space in the new building.

Steve Johnson
NY Zoological Society Archives

OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE HOSTS MUSEUM ARCHIVES WORKSHOP

For two chilly days in March 1988 forty hardy souls gathered at Old Sturbridge Village to learn and exchange ideas about museums' most overlooked resource-archives. Old Sturbridge Village (OSV) and the New England Museum Association (NEMA) cosponsored the workshop on Museum Archives which was held March 18-19. The workshop was directed toward those who have responsibility for managing museum records, but limited experience in archival theory, methods, and procedures. Registration was limited to forty and the workshop filled quickly. In addition to the program, the registration fee of \$65.00 included admission to Old Sturbridge Village both days, Friday luncheon and three Society of American Archivists publications.

Program Highlights

The program included a wide range of archival topics presented by selected faculty, all of whom addressed the special nature of archives in a museum environment: Alan L. Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Institution Archives - Appraisal and Management of Museum Records; Laurie A. Baty, Grants Analyst, National Historical Publications and Records Commission - Federal Funding Sources: The Hand That Feeds; David E. Horn, Corporate Archivist and Records Manager, Boston Edison Co. - Processing for Use: The Arrangement and Description of Museum Materials; Cheryl Leibold, Archivist, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts - User-Friendly Archives: Dealing with People Who Want Information; Katherine Kane, Director of Public Services and Access, Colorado History Museum - Legal Issues in Archival Management; Veronica Cunningham, Director of Microfilming Services, Northeast Document Conservation Center-Preservation Microfilming; and Joan C. Allen, Assistant Librarian, OSV, Sarah Carnahan, Coordinator of Resources, OSV, and Penny Dam-Holewa, Volunteer, OSV-Panel Presentation: Using Volunteers in a Museum Archives. In addition, there was a conservation exhibit of archival storage materials staffed by Kathleen Frew, Conservation Technician at the village, as well as tours of the Research Library and Archives and the Visual Resource Library. The keynote speaker was Alberta Sebolt George, Executive Vice President at OSV, who offered practical advice on initiating an archives program during her presentation entitled, Selling an Archives Program to Your Administration.

The keynote address was followed by a dinner (optional) at the Publick House, a traditional New England restaurant near the museum. The atmosphere throughout the two days was one of excitement, enthusiasm and camaraderie. A bond of support and understanding developed among workshop registrants and the program staff. This enthusiasm was reflected in the following evaluation and thank you comments submitted by workshop participants: "...I didn't think just filling out an evaluation sheet was sufficient to express

my appreciation... so please accept my thanks and praise for a job well done." "...Good talks from people who know their jobs"... "Appreciated the broad coverage and variety of take-away materials"... "Excellent chance to speak with others and share"... "Warm surroundings, well organized and welcome information."

Plans are underway for the 1989 Museum Archives Workshop at Old Sturbridge Village. Dates have been reserved for April 14-15, 1989, and the program promises to be just as exciting, informative and productive. For further information contact: Theresa Rini Percy, Director of Research Library, Old Sturbridge Village, 1 Old Sturbridge Village Road, Sturbridge, MA 01566.

Theresa Rini Percy
Old Sturbridge Village

SI ESTABLISHES VIDEOHISTORY PROGRAM

In June 1986 the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation awarded the Smithsonian Institution a four year grant to explore the use of video for research in the history of science and technology. In January 1988 the Smithsonian Videohistory Program was fully operational. The program works with Smithsonian historians-selected on a competitive basis - to create raw videotaped footage for archival and research purposes. Specific projects reflect the Institution's concern with the conduct of science in its broadest aspects and seek better understanding of the complex relationship of science to contemporary society.

Typical areas of interest are patronage in science, roles of think tanks, the legacy of WWII scientific mobilization, and events and trends in the relationship between science and the state. In its first year and a half the program created over sixty-five hours of taped interviews with sixty participants in a wide range of formats on topics ranging from early X-ray astronomy and aeronomy to mini and micro computers. Other projects include robotics, various aspects of the space program, Smithsonian paleontology, conservation of endangered species, and balloon reconnaissance. Each project has explored how the use of video might define, illustrate, and supplement a historian's research agenda.

Completed tapes are deposited in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, which is also the location of the Videohistory Program office. Master tapes are copied to 3/4" U-Matic dubbing masters, which are then duplicated to 1/2" VHS use copies. Masters and dubbing masters are housed in a climate controlled environment; master tapes are played only once (during the duplication process), while dubbing tapes may be used several times for duplication and editing purposes. VHS copies are kept on shelving in the program office. Tapes, transcripts, and finding aids will be available to researchers upon completion of processing and accessioning procedures.

Terri Schorzman, Program Manager
SI Videohistory Program

The fourth North American meeting of the Society for the History of Natural History will be held in Washington, D.C. on October 13-14, 1989. The meeting, which will be held at the National Zoological Park, will be co-sponsored by the Society for the History of Natural History and the National Park/Smithsonian Institution.

The "International Conference on the History and Evolution of Modern Zoos" is one of the events scheduled to commemorate the centennial of the national zoo. The Society and the Smithsonian also hope to present a pre-conference workshop on zoo archives, and the preservation of records documenting the history of menageries, zoos, and animals in captivity.

All North American members will receive a copy of the registration form for the conference.

Those interested in attending should contact William A. Deiss, North American Representative, Society for the History of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560.

GETTY HISTORY CENTER CURATES GETTY MUSEUM AND TRUST ARCHIVES

The Archives of the J. Paul Getty Museum and Trust encompasses approximately 75 linear feet of partially processed records. The Archives includes the executive and administrative records of general research interest generated by the museum from its founding in 1953 to 1973; records associated with the design and construction of the museum buildings in Malibu, 1953-1974; public information, publications, and clipping files from all activities of the J. Paul Getty Trust from 1953 to the present; and a smaller group of papers relating to J. Paul Getty as founder of the museum and trust (from c. 1938-1974). Administrative and executive records since 1973 remain in the custody of the originating offices.

The Archives of the History of Art of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities maintains the Archives. Further information on the Getty Museum and Trust Archives can be obtained by contacting the History Center at 401 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400, Santa Monica, CA 90401-1455.

Information Wanted: Researcher would like to exchange information with colleagues who use or design computerized or automated accession registers. Please contact Leon C. Miller, Special Collections, Mullins Library, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701.

The following is a complete list of the volume and issue numbers for the Museum Archivist newsletter:

- vol. 1 no. 1 - December 1986 issue
- vol. 1 no. 2 - April 1987 issue
- vol. 1 no. 3 - August 1987 issue
- vol. 2 no. 1 - December 1987 issue
- vol. 2 no. 2 - September 1988 issue

NHPRC FUNDING APPROVED FOR MUSEUM ARCHIVES PROGRAMS

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) met on June 23-24, 1988 to review more than \$2.5 million in grant requests. The following were among those programs recommended for funding:

Windham Textile and History Museum, Willimantic, CN

A grant of up to \$2,500 for a consultant to make recommendations on an appropriate records management program for the museum as well as recommendations for the construction of appropriate archival facilities for housing the museum's archives and special collections.

Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA

A grant of \$31,390 to develop an archives and records management program at the museum. The archivist will also initiate a long-range planning program for a continuing archives program at the museum.

Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences, Buffalo, NY

A grant of up to \$32,848 for a sixteen-month project to establish an archives and records management program for the society, the Buffalo Museum of Science, and the Tiffit Farm Nature Preserve.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

A grant of \$54,504 for a two-year project to appraise, arrange, describe, and preserve the museum's historical records, and to make those records accessible to the public.

In addition, at its October 1987 meeting, the agency recommended the following funding:

Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, IL

A grant of \$1,700 to plan preservation of the museum's photographic collection.

The next application deadline is 10/1/88. The Records Program application guidelines brochure may be requested by telephone or by mail. Contact:

Records Program
NHPRC - NPR
National Archives Building
Washington, D.C. 20408
(202) 523-5386

Information Wanted: The National Air and Space Museum will be developing a collection development plan and would like to receive copies of similar plans in other archival and manuscripts repositories. Please send a copy to Harry G. Heiss, National Air and Space Museum, #3100, Sixth & Independence Avenues, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20560.

Information Wanted: Letters by, to or about Pierre Auguste Renoir, the painter. Contact Barbara Ehrlich White, Dept. of Fine Arts, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155.

The Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies (v.13, no.2, 1988). "The Burnham Library of Architecture: A History," by Mary Woolever. This article recounts the interesting history of the Burnham Library. Author Woolever bases much of her careful research on records housed in the Art Institute Archives.

Curator (v. 31, no.2, June 1988). "Developing New Museum Archives," by Maygene Daniels. Based on a presentation made at the 1985 annual SAA meeting, Daniels discusses such issues as budget and administration, policy statements, special collections, physical facilities, and museum staff education concerning the archives. The article includes many examples from the National Gallery of Art Archives, where Daniels is Chief Archivist.

A Guide to the Archives of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, by Kathryn L. Corcoran and John Sanford. Buffalo, NY: The Buffalo Academy of Fine Arts, 1987. 25 pp. The Guide outlines the organization and archival holdings of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the sixth public art institution to be created in the U.S. The Guide is available for \$2.00 to cover postage and handling. Prepayment is required, and checks should be made payable to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Contact Kathryn L. Corcoran, Archivist, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, 1285 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222.

The New Criterion (Special issue, Summer 1987). "Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Museum of Modern Art: A Biographical Chronicle of the Years 1930-1944," by Margaret Scolari Barr. "Alfred H. Barr, Jr.: A Chronicle of the Years 1902-1929," by Rona Roob. As noted in the introduction to this special issue, Mrs. Roob has been responsible for processing the Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers at MOMA, and "...has provided us with a vivid account not only of Barr's intellectual apprenticeship but of the entire academic and museum milieu in which he acquired his knowledge and experience as a scholar and connoisseur."

Planning the Documentation of Museum Collections, by D. Andrew Roberts. Duxford, Cambridge: Museum Documentation Association, 1985. 539 pp. This volume presents the findings of a one and one-half year investigation of the present condition and future development of documentation procedures in museums, looking specifically at British museums and more generally at North American ones. The publication is of interest and use to all museum professionals. Complete with four appendices and flow-charts. For a complete account see Laurie Baty's review in the spring 1987 issue of Art Documentation, pp.40-41.

Smithsonian Institution Archives Annual Report for FY 1987. Provides an overview of the activities of the SI Archives and its professional staff for fiscal year 1987. The report

includes statistical analyses of reference transactions and volume/scope of holdings. The SI Archives Annual Report for FY1988 will be issued sometime this fall. For copies of these reports contact Alan Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Institution, A & I Building, Room 2135, Washington, D.C. 20560, (202) 357-1420.

Smithsonian Institution Archival, Manuscript, and Special Collection Resources, edited by Alan L. Bain and William R. Massa, Jr. April 1988. This small but useful guide to Smithsonian Institution holdings provides "a pan-Institutional view of the diverse disciplines that make up the Smithsonian...." The Guide is organized alphabetically by individual repository (from Archives of American Art through Smithsonian Institution Libraries) and includes details such as scope of the collection(s), hours of operation, and address/telephone number. Copies are available from Alan Bain (see address listed for previous entry).

SYSTEMS STUDY OF SI ARCHIVES AVAILABLE

A systems study for the Smithsonian Institution Archives has been completed by the American Management Systems (AMS), Inc.

This study included a general functional requirements statement based on the Smithsonian Archives mission and the activities generated to fulfill it. Description of activity procedures were based on SIA's procedural manuals and AMS interviews of the Archives' staff.

In order to develop an internal integrated archival management system, the functional requirements study included SIA records surveys and appraisal of records; disposition schedules and tracking actions necessary to acquire records, and/or discard them according to schedule; accessioning and shelving records; tracking processing activities, and the development of bibliographic guides and indices; records preservation; user information, and the multiple file structures used to store information regarding these functions. In addition, the requirements study included the need for internal tracking of accounting and personnel action, and the means for tying yearly management activities into annual budgetary report statements.

Based on the functional requirements statement, AMS provided an analysis of architectural alternatives and options for automating SIA management activities. AMS concluded its study with a life cycle cost analysis of the preferred automation tool, a mini-computer.

Presently, the mini-computer option is cost prohibitive, and SIA is looking into developing pieces of the internal management system on local personal computers.

Persons wishing to receive a copy of the study should write to Alan Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Institution Archives, A & I Building, Room 2135, Washington, D.C. 20560.

A CASE STUDY IN MUSEUM ARCHIVES: THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM AND ITS MASTER PLAN COMPETITION

by Deborah Wythe, Archivist
The Brooklyn Museum Archives

[Editor's note: The following is an account of the Brooklyn Museum Archives staff involvement in the research and publication of A New Brooklyn Museum: The Master Plan Competition (New York, Rizzoli, 1988). The book's authors and researchers as well as those architects who participated in the competition relied heavily on archival resources to examine the museum's architectural history. The publication project and its accompanying exhibition are examples of how archives can play an active and effective role in museum planning and administration.]

Every museum archives is faced with the task of documenting the physical structure of its parent institution. But at The Brooklyn Museum, development of a new master plan for the Museum acted as a catalyst for the establishment of the Archives and, in turn, compelled the Archives to grapple with every aspect of documentation quickly and with a sense of urgency. In the first two years of its existence, the Archives responded to the challenges of the Museum's Master Plan Competition and long-range building project while maintaining our broader goals of organizing and making accessible all records relating to the institution.

The project provided a laboratory for intensive exploration of questions concerning access, organization and documentation, the development of archives administrative procedures, and the establishment of solid, cooperative relationships with other Museum departments. This report is a case study of the ways in which the Archives participated in a major Museum-wide project and of how this participation affected the direction and organization of the Archives itself.

Master Plan Initiated

One of Robert T. Buck's first major actions as Director of The Brooklyn Museum was the establishment of an architectural master plan project, announced in the Minutes of the Board of Trustees in December 1983, just six months after his appointment. The project, funded in part by a grant from the Sherman Fairchild Foundation, encompassed a Museum-wide self-study and culminated in the Master Plan Competition and its accompanying exhibition and publication, A New Brooklyn Museum: The Master Plan Competition. As the project began, it became clear that establishing a Museum Archives, proposed by Principal Librarian Deirdre Lawrence, would be a critical element in the successful gathering together of all information and documents required for the competition and beyond. As a result, a grant proposal was presented to the NHPRC in 1984, noting that "the moment is upon us to preserve and organize our archival records." The proposal was approved and the Archives established as a division of the Museum Libraries in the Fall 1985. A full-time archivist and part-time assistant were hired, an office constructed across from the Library Reading Room, and work began.

Museum's Early History

A brief note on the history of The Brooklyn Museum and the building is appropriate here, since the complexity of this history bears directly on the difficulties facing the Archives. First, the "Central Museum" was originally a component of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, which also included the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Academy of Music and a quite substantial Department of Education. The Museum also oversaw what is now the Brooklyn Children's Museum. The Museum did not achieve independent status under the Institute until 1913 with the appointment of its first Director, William Henry Fox, sixteen years after the first wing opened. The facility was not known as The Brooklyn Museum until the 1930s.

The Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences underwent several changes in name and character following its founding as the Brooklyn Apprentices' Library in 1823; we are most concerned here with untangling the web from about 1889 on, when the idea of constructing an appropriately imposing home for this "broad and comprehensive institution for the advancement of science and art, the advancement of knowledge, [and] the education of the people" first took root. The Museum's landmark McKim, Mead & White building was thus planned not only as a museum building but also as an eventual home for most of the educational components of the Institute. A further twist: in 1898, the City of Brooklyn became a borough of the City of New York under the consolidation movement, moving official jurisdiction over the building from the Brooklyn Department of Parks to that of New York City. As any archivist knows, these organizational tangles affect the location of records relating to various periods and functions.

McKim, Mead & White's work began in 1895 and continued sporadically through 1934, when the contractual relationship with the firm ended. The massive Beaux-Arts building was never completed as planned, and over the ensuing fifty-odd years a series of master plans, additions, renovations, and alterations were considered and sometimes executed. The current Master Plan project addresses this history and the future needs of the Museum. Museum administrators realized early on that access to past records and documentation of current work were crucial factors in the successful outcome of the project.

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Organization of Architecture Plans Begun

One of the first tasks faced by the Archives staff was locating architectural plans of the Museum building. Over the years and during a long series of construction and renovation programs, the plans had become scattered among several Museum departments and, as they had moved from active to inactive status, had been stored with the Building Architect, the Superintendent, the Operations Department, and here and there in the labyrinthine basements and attics of the building. (The 1985 survey of Museum holdings performed by a team of five field archivists during the state-wide Historical Documents Inventory Project of the NY Historical Resources Center, Cornell University, provided an excellent starting point for this search.) Some plans had been folded and filed with the correspondence files which referred to them; others were rolled with groups of seemingly unrelated plans, as they had been used by various building contractors. Condition ranged from pristine (a few) to torn and filthy. Prior card index systems and other organizational schemes had been developed, changed, and reworked so many times as to be unusable.

Once the plans had been collected, preservation and access became primary concerns. As administrators of the Master Plan Competition, the Museum's Planning Department had established several grant-funded staff positions; the responsibilities of one staff member covered building documentation - a perfect opportunity for a cooperative project. The Archives staff worked with the Planning Department staff to coordinate a crew of five student interns and five volunteers who relaxed, cleaned, organized, and identified thousands of plans. We worked with the Conservation Department to establish preservation protocols, contacted several institutions that had worked with architectural records, and gradually changed the architectural plan collection from masses of unidentified rolls in the Archives to some sixty drawers of well-ordered folders in flat files in the Planning Department.

As the project progressed, it became clear that the plans would be active files for the foreseeable future - permanent records of the Museum, but used too heavily for Archives staff to serve the many architects, planners, and contractors who would need constant access during the projected twenty-year Master Plan. As a result, our role became that of facilitator and consultant rather than keeper: finding the records, helping to establish systems, and advising on preservation, storage, and arrangement. The Planning Department grant allowed for the purchase of an architectural photocopier, so that original plans need not be loaned out. The grant also will cover item-indexing of the plans on a microcomputer database, something very useful for the projected audience but unlikely to be done within an archives context. The architectural plans, neglected for many years, now have been restored to their proper place and function in the Planning Department.

Photographic Documentation Gathered

A similar but slightly less daunting situation existed with photographic documentation of the building. While both vintage and recent prints were scattered throughout the building, the original glass plate negatives remained in the Photography Department. The negatives were disorganized, several different numbering systems had been used over the years, and identification was lacking for some items. Again, a cooperative project developed: Archives staff worked with a Planning Department volunteer to arrange and document the glass negatives; the Photography Department then made three full sets of prints (one set to be added to the Archives holdings) which the volunteer collated, identified, and placed in binders; vintage and more recent prints from around the building were collected, organized, and put in proper storage by Archives staff; and finally, another volunteer checked the prints made from the glass negatives against the Archives photo holdings so that copy negatives could be made for any additional images.

Continuing photographic documentation of the building during implementation of the Master Plan will eventually feed into the Archives. A complete record of existing conditions was made in 1987; the slides were organized and identified from the start of that project and can easily be incorporated into the Archives once they cease being active records. A similar concern for documentation led the Planning Department to study and reorganize their filing system with an eye toward preservation of a coherent, permanent record of the Master Plan project. We like to think that the Archives helped build such an awareness!

Policy on Access Established

The immediate needs of researchers responsible for the historical sections of the catalog and exhibition narratives had to be met, a fact which determined the direction of the Archives' work for several months. Published material on the Museum was already held by the Library, providing a good overview of the building's history, but archival records had to be quickly located, accessioned, and made ready for use. Important decisions had to be made on access. Could and should records be used with minimal processing? Should we give disordered records to researchers, and what if they wanted to rearrange them? How much description was necessary for basic access?

The project gave the Archives staff the opportunity to test a liberal approach to access, based on the idea that we would make available as much material as possible to our "friendly" group of patrons - Museum staff and other commissioned researchers. This policy worked, not only for the Master Plan project, but also for the Museum Archives and its overall mission. We quickly developed and have since maintained a reputation for prompt and reliable service.

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During the opening months of the Archives' existence, Director's files for 1933-1969 were accessioned, and those for 1913-1933 were located and accessible to Archives staff while negotiations proceeded for their transfer. Because the organizational plan of the Museum vested strong authority in the Office of the Director, particularly in its early years, written documentation concerning the design and construction process from 1913 through the 1950s was concentrated in the records of that office. Processing these records received top priority, and a database was developed so that folder-level descriptions could be input as soon as records were processed. This gave us the ability to search these files at a detailed level from the beginning of the project, and helped immeasurably with reference requests.

Finding pre-1913 building information proved much more difficult. The Museum came under the direction of the Institute Director, Franklin Hooper, and because the Institute's offices were at another site in Brooklyn, records were very sparse and incomplete - their preservation often accidental and certainly occasional. Luckily, the Institute Treasurer's Office had been located at The Brooklyn Museum, resulting in the on-site preservation of a complete set of bound Board of Trustees minute books. Other records had been sent to the Museum in large canvas laundry sacks after a flood at the Institute's offices in the Academy of Music, and had been saved by our Registrar. Among this group were several folders of early correspondence between McKim, Mead & White and Director Hooper. Another batch of Hooper letters turned up in the bottom of a box of miscellaneous publications also sent over from the Academy and stored in the basement. An intriguing letter in the early Director's files refers to Institute records stored in the Museum's monumental front steps which were torn down in 1934. Where had they gone? Regrettably, the bulk of Hooper's records remain unrecovered for the present. The one foot of records we have are limited but in good condition. Researchers continue to use these files unprocessed until we are certain that no other batches of Hooper material will be discovered and added to the series.

The daily administration of the Museum was handled by the Curator-in-Chief from its opening in 1897 until Director Fox's appointment in 1913. The Curator-in-Chief also served as a departmental curator. There were no Records of the Curator-in-Chief's Office preserved as such, but once we understood the Museum's organization it was clear that those records probably would be found among those of the appropriate curatorial department. The search was futile at first - several of these officers had been curators of the now-defunct Natural Science Department - but, once again, a cache of files had been saved by the Registrar. The materials totaled approximately 5 linear feet and were extremely disordered. A series such as this would normally have been assigned low priority for processing, but given the

needs of the Master Plan project, these records were moved to the top of our list. The Archives Assistant spent several weeks working out a logical arrangement, based on what we knew and what he was learning about the department's function. He soon had the papers arranged and folder descriptions in the database.

Abstracts to Board Minutes Developed

The minutes of the Board of Trustees were a logical place to look for basic facts: who, what, and when, though rarely why. Minute books are traditionally considered confidential records, and those of The Brooklyn Museum Board of Trustees came to the Archives with the stipulation that their use would be restricted, although information could be extracted and provided to researchers. As a result, the responsibility for searching for and reporting on relevant entries fell upon the Archives staff. With a good card index covering the volumes up until 1937, the job was time-consuming but not too difficult. After completing several major abstracts on the word processor, it became clear that such documentation would be useful beyond the immediate project, so the entries were loaded into our database. Each search is identified by a keyword and can be reconstructed, combined with others, or, a more detailed search done by combining the keyword with terms from within the individual abstract entries. We have opened non-current minutes to Museum staff, and continue to add abstracts to the database so that it is active and growing.

Another access problem was peculiar to this project. The Master Plan Competition, in order to be fair, strictly controlled the information available to those firms participating in the construction design bid. Besides the thick competition information binder given to each architectural firm, published materials in the Library and certain Archives materials were designated as open for research. The Archives was responsible for a series of photographs and a large plaster model of the original McKim, Mead & White scheme. Our record of reference requests had to be impeccable, so that any use of these materials or others in the Archives could be documented. Accurate record-keeping also was essential for our other researchers, since we were discovering new material regularly. Archives staff had to know exactly what each archives patron had used during his/her visit, so that we could provide any new materials during future visits.

Some Mysteries Solved and Myths Retired

Some interesting things were learned from the project in terms of history clarified and myths dispelled. They ranged from simple facts: Franklin Hooper's position was Director of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, not Director of the Museum; to more critical issues: the remodelling of the front entrance and design of the front lobby.

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MUSEUM ARCHIVIST NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST INFORMATION

Dear Readers: We are trying to budget our mailing and printing costs. Please complete and mail this form if you wish to continue receiving the newsletter. Those who do not send in a form will be removed from the mailing list. Please mail the form by 10/31/88 to Alan Bain, Associate Archivist, Smithsonian Institution, A & I Building, Room 2135, Washington, D.C. 20560 (202) 357-1420. Thanks for your cooperation.

Name: _____

Title/Occupation: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

SAA Member: yes [] no []

AAM Member: yes [] no []

Type of museum or organization: please
select one from the choices below _____Type of holdings: please select no more
than two from the choices below _____

- 1.0 Art (General)
 - 1.1 crafts
 - 1.2 cultural centers
- 2.0 Children's
- 3.0 College and University
- 4.0 Company or Business
- 5.0 History (General)
 - 5.1 historical societies
 - 5.2 historic houses, sites
 - 5.3 maritime, naval, whaling
 - 5.4 military
- 6.0 Parks, Nature, and Visitor Centers

- 7.0 Science (General)
 - 7.1 Aero/astronautics, planetariums
 - 7.2 anthropology
 - 7.3 aquariums
 - 7.4 arboretums, botanical gardens
 - 7.5 archaeology
 - 7.6 natural history, natural sciences
 - 7.7 physical sciences and technology
 - 7.8 zoological parks
- 8.0 Religious
- 9.0 Editor
- 10.0 Consultant
- 11.0 Other _____

The removal in 1934 of the monumental front stairway designed by McKim, Mead & White involved intense disagreement, and negotiations had finally resulted in the firm's withdrawal from further work on the Museum structure. Research in the Archives has now established some of the reasons behind the change. Rebuilding the stairway and restoring several sections of the original building are required in the Master Plan, so the documentation has a practical purpose as well as intellectual purpose.

The Master Plan project yielded some valuable results. We now have a well-researched and documented publication on the history of the Museum building which includes photos and reproductions of architectural plans and scholarly consideration of the building in a broader context. The publication also includes a chronology of the institution and documents the Master Plan Competition. Architectural plans and photographs are preserved, organized and accessible. Records of the building held by our Archives are identified and accessible, and those in other repositories have been investigated. Some specific historical questions have been answered or clarified. The Archives reference capabilities have

been enhanced: fact sheets drawn up during the project are held in our reference files, so that information not appearing in the catalog is still available in concise form. Descriptive practices have been honed and the database quickly brought to a high level of usefulness. Policies and procedures have been tested and revised.

Most importantly, the Archives enjoyed a high degree of visibility. Our intimate involvement with such a major museum undertaking in our first year was harrowing at times, but it certainly challenged our abilities and established our reputation throughout the Museum. The Archives is known from the basement to the attic, and the number of reference requests increases constantly. Better still, the Archives' total operating cost has shifted this year from grant funding to the Museum's annual operating budget. And happily, as a part of the Master Plan, the Museum is committed to providing a Department of Information Services, which will include the Archives. The Competition Guidelines include space allotments and details for public access, reading rooms, and storage and work areas for the Archives - we are indeed on the map!