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# MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

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Newsletter of the Museum Archives Roundtable  
Society of American Archivists

February 1990

Volume 4 Number 1

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## GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR!

The work of the Museum Archives Roundtable continues. As the re-elected chair, I would like to thank and welcome my fellow roundtable officers: Vice Chair, Kathleen Hartt, Houston Museum of Fine Arts; Recording Secretary, Cheryl Leibold, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; Membership Secretary, Alan Bain, Smithsonian Institution Archives; and Newsletter Editor (2nd term), Deborah Wythe, Brooklyn Museum. Special thanks go to Deborah and Alan for the dedicated efforts they have made for the roundtable during the past year and their willingness to continue serving the cause for another. Also a very special thanks to Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, former chair, who babysat me through my first year as chair. Her knowledge and expertise were a continuous inspiration to me as I learned the inner workings of the roundtable and SAA.

I have been busy coordinating the drafting of a three-year plan according to the Society of American Archivists guidelines. This plan includes reaffirming the roundtable's mission statement and targets activities in the following areas: publications, outreach and education. It also proposes to change the status of the roundtable to that of a section. A complete copy of the approved three-year plan will be available next year [cont. on p 3].

## MINUTES

### MUSEUM ARCHIVES ROUNDTABLE MEETING OCTOBER 26, 1989

The 1989 roundtable meeting, held in conjunction with the Society of American Archivists annual meeting in St. Louis, was called to order by Theresa Percy, Chair. Announcements of several proposed changes in the structure of the roundtable were described, and approved via voice vote. The changes are: the chair will now serve for two years (Theresa will serve a second year); the new position of Vice-Chair will assist the Chair (Kathleen Hartt volunteered for this); Alan Bain, who has done the newsletter mailing to date, will be the Membership Secretary; and a Recording Secretary will take minutes at the roundtable meetings (Cheryl Leibold volunteered). Deborah Wythe will continue to edit the *Museum Archivist*.

After introductions by the 30 members present, a number of announcements were made:

1. The roundtable booth at the Exhibits area would need volunteers the next day. (In fact about 6 or 8 people did stop by the table and asked to be on the mailing list.)
2. Proposals for SAA in 1990 (Seattle) and for AAM in 1991 (Denver) were called for. Two proposal ideas for museum archives sessions for Seattle were circulated and comments were solicited [cont. on p. 2].

## 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. Next deadline: July 15, 1990.

Contact the Editor, *Museum Archivist*, The Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238 718 638-5000 x311).

Address circulation questions to Alan Bain, Smithsonian Institution, A&I Building, Room 2135, Washington, DC 20560.

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## ROUNDTABLE BUSINESS

**MINUTES** [continued from p.1]

3. It was noted that the St. Louis program had two sessions organized by the roundtable: "The Information Chain: A National Integrated Data Base" and "The Seed That Grows: Federal Funding for Archives Programs." Members were encouraged to attend.

4. The next issue of *Museum Archivist* will appear in February 1990. Deadline for submissions is December 15. The September issue has a deadline of July 15. Members were encouraged to submit articles and notices to Deborah Wythe at The Brooklyn Museum.

5. SAA requires roundtables to submit a three-year plan and the Chair asked for volunteers to assist in the preparation of this document. The plan will include our wish to update existing museum archives publications and to produce new ones. Volunteers were asked to sign up for this effort or to get in touch later.

6. Part of the 3-year plan will also include information exchange and education. To this end the Chair mentioned the next Old Sturbridge Village Museum Archives Institute to be held in April 1990. Funding may be sought for similar institutes in other regions and comments on this were encouraged. Arthur Breton also pointed out the Smithsonian's Museum Archives Workshop to be held again in 1990. The possibility of offering continuing education credit for such programs was also suggested.

7. Another concern is to strengthen our contacts at AAM. Maygene Daniels reported that her work with Pat Williams on the AAM accreditation form produced very positive results. All agreed that sessions at AAM were a desirable goal.

8. Kathleen Hartt reported that the position of Assistant Archivist is open at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and that after approval by the Board, the Amon Carter Museum will probably hire an archivist.

[cont. on p.3]

## ROUNDTABLE BUSINESS

[LATE NEWS FLASH – SEE P.21!]

### PROGRAM PROPOSALS AXED

The Roundtable submitted two proposed sessions for the 1990 annual meeting to the Program Committee. "Prescription or Gene-ric?" considered the need for specialized training to fit a particular type of archival work. "Birth of a Salesman" dealt with our role as in-house educator, trainer, and salesman in working with users of archives.

Both sessions were rejected. The Program Committee received nearly 250 proposals for 90 slots. As a result, they instituted a numerical rating system based on criteria such as level of interest, currentness, relevance to the profession as a whole, and whether the topic could be covered in the allotted time. Based on these ratings, the top 120 proposals were considered and 90 were selected.

It seems to us that an organized effort should be made not only to pick the best sessions, as was done, but to provide a balanced meeting. An initial breakdown by general topic--education, automation, preservation, description, etc.--and competition within those sub-groups would ensure an annual meeting that would serve all members of the profession, even those of us who work in the smaller corners of it.

We hear (unofficially) that no sessions on education--those of Museum Archives Roundtable included--made the final cut. One of our speakers, Kathleen Hartt, has been placed in a session organized by Tim Ericson to fill the education gap.

### GREETINGS [continued from p. 1]

Two program proposals were submitted for the 1990 annual meeting in Seattle. One session examines the positive and negative aspects of specialized training for archivists and the other looks at the role of the archivist within an institution as educator, trainer and salesman.

The roundtable is always looking for volunteers. As part of the long-range plan we will need able bodies to serve on a publications committee to evaluate current needs and gaps in museum archival literature, and as liaisons to promote archival issues to relevant national and regional professional organizations such as the American Association of

Museums, American Association for State and Local History, etc.

If anyone is interested in getting involved, please contact any one of the roundtable officers:

Theresa Rini Percy  
Research Library  
Old Sturbridge Village  
1 Old Sturbridge Village Road  
Sturbridge, MA 01566.

Alan Bain  
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### MINUTES [continued from p.2]

9. Laurie Baty reported that the NHPRC will continue to fund museum archives projects and noted that the deadline of February 1 still stands but she would like to see pre-deadline proposals in November. New grant application guidelines are now available.

Following the announcements, the Chair asked for a discussion of the topic: "What is unique about museum archivists?" Tony Rees of the Glenbow Museum opened the discussion with the comment that he finds it difficult to wear two hats, i.e. manuscripts curator for a large and heavily-used historical collection, and at the same

[continued on p. 4]

MINUTES [continued from p. 3]

time the institutional archivist for the entire museum. He stated that the institutional archives are his biggest headache since time is limited and they already have a huge backlog. Other members shared this problem but many agreed that the issue is the reverse for them: the institutional archives are the most important and heavily used part of the collection.

In the remaining minutes of the meeting several other attempts were made to isolate factors unique to museum archivists. One point made was that museum archivists have to deal with and understand the responsibilities of curators and registrars. Convincing them that the archivist's job is also one of collection care and control and interacting with them is often difficult. Relationships with exhibition and research personnel are also problematic.

Cheryl Leibold  
Pennsylvania Academy

## NEWS, NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS

The Archives Committee of the SPNHC has announced that the Smithsonian Archives will serve as the official depository of the Society's records. All material previously assembled will be organized and transferred to Washington; future archival material will also be transferred to the Smithsonian Archives.

The Society's fifth annual meeting will be held on May 7-11, 1990, in Chicago, hosted by the Field Museum of Natural History. The tentative program includes sessions on pest control, museum hazards and safety, problem solving, and a symposium on the conservation of exhibit specimens. The meeting is open to anyone with a professional interest in the management and preservation of natural history collections. For further information, contact David Willard, Bird Division, Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605 (312 922 9410, x269).

### "CONFRONT THE DRAGON" OSV/NEMA MUSEUM ARCHIVES INSTITUTE

The third Old Sturbridge Village and New England Museum Association Museum Archives Institute will be held at Old Sturbridge Village on April 20-21, 1990. The Institute has been expanded into a two-year program, to allow for a more concentrated and in-depth approach to the topics. Participants may join the program either year. The sessions are geared for the beginner and include such topics as records management, appraisal, arrangement and description, reference and access, legal issues, preservation, management, fundraising, exhibits, and outreach.

In addition to the basic program, the Institute will offer a concurrent special topic program focused on photographs. This subject will be divided into the following areas: identification and dating, care and storage, preservation and reproduction, appraisal, copyright and reproduction rights, photographic services, and access. The Institute is planning on offering a special topic program each year. Institute faculty is made up of museum and archives professionals who share a national reputation. Both the basic and special topic programs are two days long, with a limited registration of 20 and a fee of \$80.00 each. For information, call Theresa Rini Percy, Director, Research Library, Old Sturbridge Village, (508 347 3362).

### MUSEUM ARCHIVIST HONORED

Maygene Daniels, chief of the Gallery Archives at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., was named a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists at the annual meeting in St. Louis. While Ms. Daniels' broad-ranging activities and publications were cited in the *SAA Newsletter*, we would like to add here her advocacy of and work in museum archives. Most recently, her article "Developing New Museum Archives" (*Curator* 31 (1988): 99-105) traces the rise in interest in museum archives and lays out the steps for museums to take in starting a program, steps that she has experienced herself [cont. on p.5].

## NEWS, NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NEW SAA FELLOW [continued from p. 4]

Ms. Daniels was named first Gallery Archivist at the National Gallery in 1985. In establishing a new archives, she was faced with a massive educational task--alerting administration to the need for storage space so that records could be removed from an attic area, bringing the research value of the collection to the attention of staff and public, and sensitizing staff to the need to preserve records.

In addition to the records of the Gallery, the Archives holds all the records of the creation of the East Building, donated by architects I.M. Pei & Partners, from conceptual work to actual working drawings. The latter collection comes under the care of the architectural historian mentioned above and is used by scholars as well as staff members involved in building maintenance.

In the past five years, the Archives has grown to include three support staff members plus a doctoral student in architectural history. One staff member has primary responsibility for the Archives' oral history program. This program proposes to illuminate policy issues relating to the Gallery through interviewing high-level curators and administrators, trustees, donors, well-placed staff members, and informed observers of the Gallery's activities. Since such issues are rarely fully covered in written records, these oral histories will be invaluable in preserving a complete record of the history of the Gallery. The current focus of the Archives is, by necessity, on the Gallery's 50th anniversary in 1991. Preparation of books, profiles, movies and the like are occupying much of Ms. Daniels' and her staff's energy.

In commenting on her work, Ms. Daniels notes that she finds, more and more, that the critical factor for a successful operation keeps coming back to the

basics--good processing and effective description. Special projects are useful and interesting, but the work of the archives revolves around control of the records. In the interest of improved access, the Gallery Archives has recently moved from finding aids created and stored in a word-processing system to a database system. The transfer is going smoothly.

SAA Fellows are recognized for their outstanding contributions to the archival profession. We recognize *our* Fellow here for her contributions to our corner of the profession. Congratulations, Maygene!

### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

The Museum is seeking a qualified Assistant Archivist to help administer its archival program. The Archives consist of museum institutional records, records of the Contemporary Arts Museum (Houston), and personal papers. The Archives include 1700 feet of records with annual increases of 250 feet. Special formats include architectural drawings, audio/video tapes, and photographs. The Archives is a part of the museum's Hirsch Library, which is a special member of the Research Libraries Group. Both contribute records to the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN).

Responsibilities: Arrange and describe archival collections; assist with appraisal and reference. Implement processing priorities; frequently supervise interns/volunteers in processing activities. Administer Archives in absence of Archivist.

Qualifications: MLS or MA with concentration in archives administration or equivalent experience required. Experience with archival arrangement and descriptive practices, familiarity with MARC/AMC required. Familiarity with RLIN desirable. Individual must possess top oral and written skills.

Salary: \$18,000 plus excellent benefits. Funds available to assist with relocation. Submit letter of application and resume to Personnel Director, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Box 6828, Houston, TX 77265. Application deadline: March 16, 1990.

## NEWS, NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

No more museum archives workshops at Smithsonian Institution?

The Office of Museum Programs of the Smithsonian Institution is currently reevaluating its entire series of workshops. The Museum Archives Workshop will not be offered this spring and may or may not reappear in the next season's offerings.

The workshop's fate may depend on making the Office aware of its importance. Address your comments to the Director, Office of Museum Programs, Smithsonian Institution, A&I Building, Room 2235, Washington, DC 20560.

### NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES

In Spring 1989, representatives of the New York Botanical Garden, Bronx County Historical Society, Museum of the American Indian, SUNY-Maritime, and the New York Zoological Society formed a consortium to plan responses to floods and other library and archival emergencies. The first year's activities included a obtaining \$7500 grant from the Bronx-based H. W. Wilson Foundation, which funded purchases of emergency supply kits for each institution. Each institution pledged to share emergency supplies and replenish supply kits after use. Consortium members meet periodically to exchange emergency-related information.

Other recent NYZS archival activities include purchase of a microfilm/fiche reader-printer to facilitate preservation microfilming, and opening of a search account on RLIN. Though RLIN has not yet brought any researchers to the NYZS archives, I have used RLIN to acquaint researchers with other archival collections. I also began downloading NYZS records from RLIN, for use in local online catalogs, pursuant to RLG regulations.

Steven P. Johnson  
New York Zoological Society

### ARCHIVES INITIATIVE BY AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION

The American Institute for Conservation, recognizing that the documentation generated in the process of examining and treating works of art and artifacts has long-term significance for future research, is promoting the development of a treatment record archives. Nancy Schrock's article, "AIC Initiates Archives Effort," in *Conservation Administration News* 39 (October 1989), details the studies leading up to this decision and the activities planned for the implementation of a conservation records network. This is definitely a "must-read:" many of us will be involved in the project in one way or another.

Ms Schrock has been appointed Conservation Archives Placement Liaison by AIC and will submit a report for *Museum Archivist's* next issue, but in the meantime read the *CAN* article and if you have any questions about the project, or about the location or placement of records, please contact her at 15 Cabot Street, Winchester, MA 01890 (617 721 1229).

### BROOKLYN MUSEUM RECEIVES PRESERVATION GRANTS

The Brooklyn Museum has been awarded two generous grants targeted for the care of the research collections held in its Libraries and Archives. \$25,000 has been received from the New York State Conservation/Preservation Program, Division of Library Development, and an equal amount has been awarded by the J. M. Kaplan Fund. These grants mark the beginning of a formal plan to preserve the collection as well as upgrade the storage facilities of the Museum's two libraries and the Archives.

The New York State funding will support the hiring of consultants to recommend specific storage and environmental controls. The Kaplan funds will cover supply and equipment purchases to systematically care for the entire research collection. These grants will ensure that the Libraries' and Archives' scholarly resources are preserved and made accessible for use by The Brooklyn Museum staff and the research community.

### ARCHIVISTS SPEAK TO ZOO REGISTRARS

William Deiss, Deputy Archivist of the Smithsonian Institution, and James Glenn, Deputy Director and Senior Archivist of the National Anthropological Archives, presented an introduction to archives to zoo registrars at the 6th Annual Zoo Registrar's Workshop in Washington, D.C. The workshop was presented in conjunction with the National Zoo's Centennial Year Symposium on the History and Evolution of the Modern Zoo, October 13-14, 1989. The archives symposium was organized by Deiss and Robert J. Hoage of the Smithsonian.

The zoo registrar plays a central role in initiating and maintaining collection information systems, ensuring compliance with government regulations, and shipping animals. In many zoos, in the general absence of an archivist or librarian, the registrar takes responsibility for non-current records, particularly those related to animal collections.

The twenty registrars at the archives session represented a cross-section of zoos of public, private, and mixed sponsorship. Many municipal zoos and two state-sponsored zoos fall under municipal or state archives and records management plans, at least in theory. Recent surveys, such as Vernon Kisling's "American zoological park libraries and archives: historical considerations and current status," (*Sci-Tech Libraries* 8(4): 49-60) and Linda Rohr's "A survey of American zoo and aquarium archives" (*Sci-Tech Libraries* 9(4): 75-84) suggest that few North American zoos have organized or preserved their internal records, aside from animal records. Exceptions include the National Zoo, Lincoln Park Zoo, and Bronx Zoo.

Following the talk, Mr. Deiss described registrars as more knowledgeable about records than most audiences outside the archives field, but less oriented to the a concept of archives extending

beyond non-current specimen and other animal collection records. In my role as zoo archivist and occasional commentator on Bill's and Jim's remarks, I elicited a positive response from the registrars when I mentioned the zoo community's concern about allowing --much less promoting--outside access to zoo records. If zoo archives are to grow as a result of increasing interest in zoos and endangered animals, archivists need to acknowledge these concerns.

Steven P. Johnson  
New York Zoological Society

### FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT HOME & STUDIO FOUNDATION RECEIVES BARNEY ARCHIVE

The Research Center of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation has received a significant donation of original drawings, longue point art, sketchbooks, diaries, photographs, letters, and personal papers that once belonged to Maginel Wright Enright Barney, Frank Lloyd Wright's younger sister.

The donation was made by Barney's grandsons Nicholas, Oliver, and Robert Gillham. Their contribution spans three generations, including materials from their great grandmother, Anna Lloyd Jones Wright, and their mother, Elizabeth Enright Gillham, Maginel's only child, as well as from Maginel.

Mrs. Barney was a successful illustrator of children's books. In 1954, her daughter wrote: "My mother was largely responsible for revolutionizing textbook illustration. Up to that time, most primers had been adorned with stolid, utilitarian illustrations. What my mother did was to bring grace, liveliness, and above all, imagination to the pages of these books."

The archive is partly inventoried and selected items are currently on display in the study of the Wright home, Forest & Chicago Avenues, Oak Park, IL 60302. Tours are given seven days a week; the Research Center is open Wednesday-Saturday, 1-4PM.

Meg Klinkow  
Frank Lloyd Wright  
Home & Studio Foundation

## QUERIES

Kathleen Hartt, Museum of Fine Art, Houston, would be interested in hearing from Roundtable members who keep statistics on the use of their museum's archives by researchers and staff. Write to her at the Museum, P.O. Box 6826, Houston, TX 77265.

Have you compiled records retention schedules for development or grants department files that you would be willing to share? Deborah Wythe, The Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238.

Thank you!

## PUBLICATIONS

### THREE RECENT PUBLICATIONS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS

*The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1876-1913*, is the second volume in a series of indexes to the works of art shown in the Academy's prestigious annual exhibitions. Published by Sound View Press, this work contains an illustrated essay by Academy Archivist Cheryl Leibold on the annual exhibitions. The book indexes over 22,000 works by artist, owner, and proper names in titles. In addition the book features lists of juries, charts, and an index to advertisers. It can be ordered from Sound View Press, 206 Boston Post Road, Madison CT 06443.

*Writing About Eakins: The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection*, co-authored by Cheryl Leibold and Kathleen A. Foster, is available from the University of Pennsylvania Press. This 396-page work contains complete inventories of the manuscripts, critical essays, selected letters transcribed in full, a biographical index, and an index to the microfiche edition. The separate set of 37 microfiche cards reproduces every document in the collection

and has been designed so that scholars across the country can have access to this landmark collection of Eakins materials. The two-part publication was funded by The Henry Luce Foundation.

Ms. Leibold's research on the letters and photographs made by Eakins during his 1887 trip to Dakota Territory also resulted in the journal article "Thomas Eakins in the Badlands" in the *Archives of American Art Journal* 28 (1988).

### BUILDING THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

The architectural history of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the parkway which leads up to it were the subject of a recent exhibition and publication, *Building the City Beautiful. The Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989). Photographs, renderings, architectural plans, and models from archives, libraries, museums, and historical societies were shown at the Philadelphia Museum of Art from September 9 through November 26, 1989. Many images are beautifully reproduced in the catalog, supplementing the essays by David Brownlee.

## GRANTS

### NEW GRANT GUIDELINES

Laurie Baty of the NHPRC reminded Museum Archives Roundtable members at the St. Louis meeting that new NHPRC guidelines for applicants are now available. Jane Rosenberg, Assistant Director of Research Programs at the National Endowment for the Humanities, also announced the availability of new guidelines for the Access program. Make sure you send for them before submitting your preliminary proposal.



**NHPRC-FUNDED COMPUTER STUDY GRANT AT  
NATIONAL JEWISH ARCHIVE OF  
BROADCASTING**

The Jewish Museum's National Jewish Archive of Broadcasting in New York City has received a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to conduct a study of the various options available to the Archives in developing a MARC-based computer cataloging system, and to examine the costs and benefits of participation in a national database.

The two general options we are analyzing are 1) upgrading and maintaining the current NJAB Formula IV-based system to support the export of MARC records, or 2) migrating to a commercially-available software package that already supports the export of MARC records and that meets the other functional requirements of NJAB.

In addition, the following questions are also being studied: the possible need for and feasibility of supporting the import of MARC records to the NJAB local system, and the possible benefits and costs of membership in the Research Libraries Group and of loading NJAB records into the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN).

The MARC format has become the national standard for communicating library and archival records. The Archive's interest in developing a MARC-based system or a MARC export facility for its current system is based on the desire to make the Archive more visible and accessible to scholars and filmmakers. The ability to import MARC records from such sources as the National Moving Image Database, though not the primary focus of the project, is also important to the Archive. Access to such data would increase and improve our catalog information and help us research possible acquisitions.

The Archive staff hopes, after the conclusion of the current grant period, to disseminate and/or publish a

report of its investigations into providing a MARC-export capability for its computer system. Since other moving picture archives (as well as those in other subject areas) are facing similar problems and questions, a published record of the NJAB's experience in this area might be valuable in helping them evaluate computer system options and work toward implementing national standards in cataloging and record creation.

Ronnie W. Parker  
The Jewish Museum

**RESTORATION DOCUMENTATION PROJECT AT  
THE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT  
HOME AND STUDIO FOUNDATION,  
OAK PARK, ILLINOIS**

But before all should come a study of the nature of materials . . .  
the nature of an idea - a hand - a thought - a personality . . .

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1951

The Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation was established in Spring 1974 as a not-for-profit corporation to acquire, preserve and operate the home and studio for the public benefit. The Foundation is pledged to the preservation and restoration of the home and studio and is committed to unfolding information on the historic, artistic, and architectural heritage of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School of architecture. In 1987, the Foundation reached an audience of 67,000 individuals through tours, educational programs and Research Center reference services.

During his years in Oak Park, Frank Lloyd Wright developed a uniquely American architecture, known now as the Prairie School. For twenty years, 1889-1909, his home and studio functioned as a home for his growing family, a school, a laboratory of design, and an advertisement. From 1910 until its sale in 1925, Wright continued to make major changes to the structure. Subsequent owners broke the building into numerous apartments. Since 1974, the Foundation has spent more than \$2.5 million to restore the home and studio to its 1909 appearance, the last year Wright lived and worked in Oak Park. The documentation of [cont. on p. 10]

**FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT** [continued from p. 9] of this project includes notes, slides, correspondence, photographs, and architectural fragments, justifying the final building forms and validating its interpretation to visitors.

The Foundation received a grant of \$35,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1989-90. A large portion of the grant supported organizing, cataloging, and indexing materials generated during or essential to the restoration. The resulting archive, which documents a 15-year restoration effort, is unusual for its completeness and should be valuable to historic preservationists as well as scholars.

The grant funded current staff with the addition of temporary staff to clean, store, photograph, catalog, and index a variety of materials. These include 294 lateral file folders dealing with various aspects of the restoration, 966 large drawings of phases of the process and of furniture, and 3469 artifacts. Included among the artifacts are art glass (75 windows), sculpture, and samples of masonry, plaster, and plumbing materials. The processing of the archive allows better access to the materials by the public. The archive itself justifies the choices made during restoration, furnishes the only evidence of changes made by Wright after 1909, and provides tangible evidence of the evolution of Wright's philosophy of the home and the development of the Prairie style of architecture.

For further information about the project, see *The Plan for the Restoration and Adaptive Use of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978). The Research Center, Forest & Chicago Avenues, Oak Park, IL 60302, is open Wednesday-Saturday, 1-4PM and closed during August.

Meg Klinkow  
Frank Lloyd Wright  
Home & Studio Foundation

## THE ARCHIVES OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY AND INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

The National Institute of Arts and Letters, established in 1898, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1904) are honor societies founded by a group of writers, artists, architects, and composers at the height of the American Renaissance, an aesthetic movement that sought to impose on American art the traditions of the classical and Renaissance past. Established in emulation of European academies, the Institute and the Academy, which merged in 1976, were designed to honor talented Americans who had dedicated themselves to the advancement of a national culture. The founders hoped that by providing recognition and status to artists, they would be able to give clearer direction to American artistic life.

The Academy-Institute archives holds correspondence between members and the staff of this organization, and papers documenting its activities as an institution. This material may be used to trace the founding of the organizations, recreate debates about the functions they should serve, or document the process of electing -- or not electing -- particular members or groups of members (women were not admitted until 1926!). Separate files are maintained for each member of the organization; their contents vary dramatically, but most contain correspondence, nominating information, and press clippings. Members' letters, even when they are about the business of the organization, often provide interesting insights into their tastes and predilections, as well as their personalities. For instance, Mark Twain, commenting about election procedures, insisted that "it ought to be a rule, & a rigid one, that whenever a man offers a name, he must get up & state his reasons for his choice . . . Judas & Peter & some of the others would not have gotten in, if the Disciples had had this same ordinance."

In addition to the sort of material described above, which is generated as the organization goes about its activities, the Academy-Institute archives includes a large collection of paintings [cont. on p. 11],

### **ACADEMY-INSTITUTE** [cont. from p. 10]

sculpture, photo-graphs, manuscripts, and memorabilia that was actively solicited from members and their families between 1915 and 1940. This material includes book-length manuscripts of work by William Dean Howells, Sinclair Lewis, and Ezra Pound; shorter pieces by Henry James, Mark Twain, and Eugene O'Neill; as well as manuscript scores by composers such as Edward MacDowell, Walter Damrosch, and Howard Hanson. Artists are represented by palettes, paintbrushes, sculptors' tools, and other paraphernalia, as well as by manuscripts, including biographical writings by Kenyon Cox, Edwin Howland Blashfield and Childe Hassam.

In 1940, the administration of the organization changed and its emphasis shifted from collecting to patronage. At that time, an award program was begun in which cash prizes are awarded annually to non-member artists, writers, and composers. This policy, coupled with changing tax laws, resulted in less frequent donations to the archival collections. However, the present membership is represented by manuscripts of John Updike, Peter De Vries, George F. Kennan and others; and original scores by David Diamond and Ernst Krenek.

The archives are consulted most often by biographers and students working on doctoral dissertations. Recently, published books on William James, Nelson Algren, and John Cheever have included material from our archives. And many museum curators have visited to obtain information necessary for planning exhibitions or catalogs.

In 1985, the Academy-Institute began a project to renew the archives. New compact shelving was installed, acid-free boxes and folders purchased, and a part-time cataloger was hired. To date, we have processed approximately half of our members' files. The institutional files await.

Since the beginning of 1989, we have been "semi-automated", in that we use a word-processing program to do our cataloging and for label production. A specially-designed inventory form is filled in with the cataloging information, and then saved separately for each member's file. A printout of the entry is available in a binder in our library office. This system allows us unlimited text fields to describe significant items in the collection, but it obviously does not offer the searching, indexing, and cross-referencing capabilities of a database.

The Archives are open to researchers by appointment, Monday through Friday, 10AM- 5PM. For more information, contact Nancy Johnson, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, 633 West 155th Street, New York, NY 10032 (212 368 6361).

Nancy Johnson  
American Academy and Institute  
of Arts & Letters

### **NHPRC PROJECT AT THE WINDHAM TEXTILE AND HISTORY MUSEUM WILLIMANTIC, CT**

The Windham Textile and History Museum, which opened in August 1989, focuses upon the lives of the textile workers of New England. The Museum consists of two buildings on the site of the former American Thread Company and is a living history museum with replicas of a tenement house, the mill agent's home and a soon-to-be opened mill floor. Rotating exhibits in the main floor hall highlight various aspects of factory life and of daily life in the period from 1850 to 1930.

The Museum's Dunham Hall Library occupies a room which has served as a library since the building was built in 1877. First established for the mill workers, it is now a research library for the Museum and for scholars studying the textile industry of New England, the Victorian era in this area, and the ethnic groups who formed the workforce during our period.

The museum administration, aware of the importance of institutional archives, made a commitment to the proper preservation of the record of this [cont. on p. 12]

### TEXTILE MUSEUM [continued from p. 11]

institution's development. Aware of how little we knew about the establishment and organization of such archives, and committed to correct organization of the Archives of the Windham Textile and History Museum and the Special Collections of the Dunham Hall Library from their inception, we applied to the NHPRC for funding to seek professional advice. In 1988, we were granted funds to seek professional advice on the establishment of the archives and the organization and the care of a large collection of engineering and architectural drawings. Nancy Carlson Schrock, conservation expert, of Winchester, Massachusetts, and Maureen Melton, Archivist of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, were selected to help us.

Nancy Carlson Schrock and Maureen Melton arrived on June 28th, 1989. After a morning's discussion regarding Museum and Library philosophy and policy with the Museum's Executive Director, Laura Knott Twine, and Librarian Linda Kate Edgerton, Melton began her survey of the administrative files and Schrock started examining the engineering drawings. On the 29th the team met again to present preliminary recommendations on the records management program, suggest a revision of the collection policy, and discuss the form of the final report.

The Special Collections of the Dunham Hall Library consist of approximately 15,000 engineering and architectural drawings dating from the late 1800's to the 1960's. Produced by the Engineering Departments of the Willimantic Linen Co. and its successor, the American Thread Co., their supports range from map linen to fragile tracing paper and are in varying states of repair. While most of the pieces are drawings of mill machinery or parts, about 20% document the erection, maintenance, or remodeling of mill buildings, workers' housing, or municipal projects.

The Windham Textile and History Museum is a new and developing museum and its future archives are largely still active files in the administration offices. Ms. Melton conducted a thorough survey of the files. Her section of the final report discussed the historical and legal importance of the records and included a retention schedule for the guidance of the staff.

Ms. Schrock surveyed the drawings and some other Special Collections materials that were stored in the vault. This part of the project was completed on June 30th when Ms. Schrock discussed with the Director and Librarian the organization, conservation and storage of the Special Collections. The team's written report arrived in mid-July and incorporated all the discussions with the staff, the suggested revision of the collection policy, and final recommendations. Also enclosed was much relevant photocopied material and a bibliography of articles and books for our reference shelf.

Some of the steps recommended in the report are already underway. The rolls stored in the vault have been moved to the Special Collections Room and placed on metal shelves to await conservation treatment. A volunteer is entering title information into a database. A line item for archival supplies in the 1990 budget will build up a stock of archival supplies. Xerox Corporation recently gave us a grant to copy 500 of the most important drawings onto Mylar for use by researchers and for exhibition. We are reviewing the forms and retention schedules provided in the report and have been guided by them in establishing our own schedule.

It has been an educational and enlightening experience to work with a professional team. We were pleased with the helpful discussions and report that this project made possible and look forward to the day when we can hire an archivistconservator. Windham Textile & History Museum, 157 Union St., Willimantic, CT 06226 (203 456-2178).

Linda Kate Edgerton  
Windham Textile and History Museum

### THE MUSEUM ARCHIVIST AND THE DOCUMENTATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

American archaeology is a broad-ranging discipline with a deep and productive history. Artifact collections generated by archaeological activities are curated in anthropology museums, natural-history museums, art museums, science museums, and museums of history throughout the country. From the antiquarian interests of the 18th and 19th centuries to the multi-million dollar reservoir and highway projects funded by the federal government today, archaeologists have slowly synthesized the prehistory of our country and also have made significant contributions to the historical record.

Recognition of the importance of these endeavors is found in numerous federal laws passed to protect archaeological resources from destruction and in efforts to salvage and preserve those resources that cannot be left undisturbed. The most significant of these laws are the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. These legislative directives have resulted in a tremendous increase in the volume of archaeological activity undertaken in the United States and a corresponding increase in the volume of artifacts and associated documentation curated in the nation's museums and repositories. Indeed, the volume has exceeded the capacity of most facilities to provide long-term curatorial care.

While the artifacts, in most cases, are receiving a minimal level of care, archival preservation of the documentation associated with these artifacts is usually nonexistent. A recent study conducted for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, which cares for more than 90 archaeological collections in 10 repositories in Illinois and Missouri,

revealed serious deficiencies in the abilities of the institutions to maintain control over documentation (Thomas B. Meyers, "Management of Federal Archaeological Resources: A Case Analysis," *Journal of the Steward Anthropological Society*, 18 (1988-89): 7-21). Only three repositories could produce complete sets of associated documents, and only one of the three applies standard archival care to the records. Two institutions could produce no documentation whatsoever for the artifact collections under their care. There is no reason to believe that this situation is an aberration. Discussions with archaeologists and curators in other parts of the country reveal similar situations.

Many archaeologists blame the federal government for its failure to issue adequate guidelines for curation of artifacts and preservation of records and for not providing the funding necessary to maintain the collections once they are recovered. While funding remains an issue, federal curatorial guidelines will soon be forthcoming. In August 1987, the National Park Service published its long-awaited rules governing the care of federally owned archaeological collections (U.S. Department of the Interior, "Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archaeological Collections: Proposed Rule," Federal Register 52 (August 28, 1987): 32740-32751). When published in final form in the Code of Federal Regulation, museums and repositories housing archaeological materials recovered from federally-supported projects will be required to provide adequate long-term care for these collections. The General Accounting Office (U.S. General Accounting Office, *Cultural Resources: Problems Protecting and Preserving Federal Archaeological Resources*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1987) has ruled that all federal agencies will be bound by the regulations.

The rules not only address the recovered artifacts but also specify that associated documentation must also be preserved. Although the guidelines do not provide detailed standards of archival care for the records, they do require that those records be protected from fire and [cont. on p. 14]

### ARCHAEOLOGY [cont. from p. 13]

theft and that a duplicate set of records be stored in a separate location. In addition, curators must have the necessary professional qualifications to care for the materials and insure that they are handled, stored, cleaned, and conserved in a manner that protects them from "possible deterioration from adverse temperature and relative humidity, visible light and ultraviolet radiation, dust, soot, gases, mold, fungus, insects and rodents, and general neglect" (Interior, 1987: 32746-7). Unfortunately, when dealing with collection documentation, most archaeologists and curators of archaeological collections do not possess the professional expertise necessary to meet this challenge.

What are the implications of these regulations for the museum archivist? I submit that whether your institution holds federally-owned archaeological collections or not, you may be the only resource available for the successful preservation of these irreplaceable documents. Museum archivists deal primarily with historical documents. The records of archaeological surveys and excavations are not "historical" documents per se, but they are the only records documenting a portion of our cultural heritage that no longer exists. Archaeology is a destructive activity. The only surviving information on the context and provenance of the recovered artifacts is in the written and photographic records produced by the archaeologist. If the records are lost, no hope exists of retrieving the information.

How can the museum archivist help? Educating archaeologists and collection managers in your institutions and/or neighboring institutions to the impending regulations and their implications is an essential first step. Although professionals in their areas of expertise, most archaeologists are poorly equipped to deal with the unique requirements

necessary for successful archival preservation of their collection documentation. They need your input and advice. Most importantly, they need to be made aware of the seriousness of the problem. The same can be said for officials in federal agencies who issue archaeological contracts. They ultimately will be held accountable for the safekeeping of collections. Funding for curation of existing collections will continue to be a problem, but future contracts must include provisions for successful long-term care. Archivists can assist agencies in writing specifications for the submission of archaeological documentation in a format that will simplify final disposition.

Thomas B. Meyers  
University of Missouri, Columbia

### PRESERVATION OF THE PHOTO STUDIO ARCHIVES AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

[Editor's note: Barbara Bridgers is Manager of the Photograph Studio at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, administering a department which employs professional photographers and darkroom technicians as well as employees responsible for archiving the negatives and researching the works of art for which new photography has been requested. This paper was read at the workshop on Care and Management of Photographic Collections presented by the Metropolitan Museum and the Northeast Document Conservation Center, December 4-6, 1989. Ms. Bridgers offers a unique perspective on the management of an archives within a working department.]

Attempting to develop a reasonable program around the issues of conservation, storage, and access to a collection of photographic material clearly requires a degree of technical understanding. Trying to negotiate that program through the channels of a non-profit hierarchy may then demand that your technical viewpoint give way to an administrative approach. This can prove difficult if the photographic material you're dealing with doesn't represent the main thrust or priority of your institution's activities.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection of record photography [cont. on p. 15]

METROPOLITAN [cont. from p. 14]

was always intended to act as a secondary or tertiary support to the primary works of art, and yet, in light of its documentary function, it is absolutely indispensable. The Met, like many other institutions, has had to confront the fact that this support collection is faltering and is itself in need of support. The basic staff and budgetary resources of the department have always been focused towards the creation of new work, rather than the preservation of that which already exists. The labor involved in reclamation activities juxtaposed against the staggering costs of conservation can at times result in a managerial hurdle that seems insurmountable.

Thus far, we can only claim to have accomplished partial solutions. In some cases, the solutions have been thoughtfully laid out and pursued. In other cases, the solutions have been the result of serendipitous or fortuitous circumstances that have unfolded around us. In either case, they may be of use, of interest, or applicable to similar problems that exist in other institutions.

The Photograph Studio's black and white negative collection was begun in 1906 when the studio was first formalized as a department. In-house photography of accessioned works of art was originally introduced because it provided the means to support and integrate written records with a visual medium--a natural for an art museum. Today these negatives number over a million. Although the heart of the main collection consists of overall and detailed images of works of art, there are numerous other categories of film which represent non-object photography, and smaller important historic collections which have entered the archives over the years from various sources.

On August 3rd, 1906--the first day of photography--ninety paintings in the collection were photographed and ninety 8x10 glass plate negatives were processed, numbered and permanently entered into the Museum's new negative inventory books.

The work of the department since that beginning reflects the history of photographic technology in general. An imaginary snapshot or time-line of the archives predictably reveals the presence of most of the film materials manufactured during the first half of the twentieth century. There are large quantities of glass plate negatives and pockets of nitrate, diacetate, and triacetate film. One feels grateful in the presence of these film types in that they are clearly representative of the continuity with which the photographic industry strove to improve the quality and dimensional stability of its products. And yet, gratitude can turn quickly to despair in the face of the distinct patterns of deterioration each displays when stored under less than ideal conditions.

There were numerous unknowns in the early decades of the Metropolitan Museum's in-house photography. It was impossible to anticipate that the accessioned works of art, and their accompanying photographic records, would expand so in volume over the course of the century. When the concept of record photography was first initiated there was little, if any, information available that indicated that the basic preservation requirements for long-term film storage would be so exacting. Finally, the cataloging system which anchored the photographs to their written records did not allow for the extensive and flexible cross-referencing that's required once a body of material exceeds the basic limits of manual retrieval.

Perhaps most importantly, no one was able to predict that photographic records possessed a tacit value which would only appreciate with time. The value of a visual record is most often revealed in its role as study material and in its impact as a publishing tool. The dormant value of photographic records awakens when the subject of a photographic print or negative is irrevocably damaged, altered or lost.

Many things have changed during the course of the Photo Studio's history and many things have remained unchanged. The standard format for photography has always been 8x10, and continues to be to this day. However, in earlier [cont. on p. 16]

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decades, large format glass plates measuring up to 20x24 inches were produced. Black and white photography has always been the norm. This also remains true today, because of the longevity of its storage properties, and because of the ease and economy with which high quality black and white prints can be produced.

The basic work of the photographers expanded greatly when color photography in the form of 35mm slide materials were introduced following World War II. This became even more true by the early 1960's when a large-format color transparency collection was begun. Today, housed in the Museum's Photo Slide Library, the collection of 35mm slides numbers nearly half a million and the Museum's collection of large format color transparencies numbers approximately 50,000. In a given year, the Photo Studio now produces approximately 70,000 to 80,000 black and white prints, 8,000 8x10 color transparencies, and upwards of 20,000 35mm color slides. The negative archives expand on a yearly basis to accept approximately 20,000 new negatives.

Some of the most damaging environmental enemies of photographic materials are high temperatures, high relative humidity, the extreme or sudden fluctuation of either, the acids released by paper in contact with both the base and the emulsion of a negative, gases released from unsealed wooden and metal cabinets, airborne particles and pollutants, and prolonged exposure to ultraviolet light. When one of these conditions is found in isolation, the difficulty of collection management is straightforward. When a complex of these conditions exists, the effort is far more involved, and the passage of time can act as a coupler which accelerates every catastrophic element already at work.

By far the most critical constant in the life of the Studio's history has been its location in the high attic of the Museum. The high attic is ripe with every deleterious environmental condition mentioned

above. The dome area of the attic is a large, vaulted space crowned by a glass paneled roof. The volume of air which circulates through this area is laden with the minute debris of crumbling walls and broken ceilings. Used as a storage area for plants and trees throughout the year, the attic also labors against the influx of pollens, insects and decaying organic material.

Given the glass skylight roof, the volume of the attic's square footage, and its vast height from floor to ceiling--the summers are hotter and the winters are colder. Up until twenty years ago, the area had no air conditioning. This already complex environment is complicated further because the oculi of the three skylight domes, which extrude into the attic from the Great Hall below, are open to the street. The original architectural design of the building's Great Hall was such that these openings functioned to funnel warm air upwards and exhaust it into the attic--directly connecting the Photograph Studio and all it contains to even greater potential sources of dirt and pollution from the outside world. This is the area in which the Museum's negative collection is stored and has been stored since 1906. Additionally, the vast majority of these negatives, the most fragile by virtue of their age and manufacture, have been housed in this area in untreated oak cabinets since that time.

When I first began to look closely at the negative collection, the archivist in the studio brought to my attention the condition of the nitrate and diacetate sections of the main archives. I was astounded to see the deterioration of the film and the amount of it that was affected, wasn't yet able to grasp the implications of what this damage might represent. In part, this was because I didn't yet technically understand the phenomenon that I was witnessing.

The nitrate and diacetate stock was positioned primarily in the collection documenting the Museum's works of art. My initial assumption, like that of many other people, was that a damaged negative of a work of art could be replaced by recalling the object and simply rephotographing it. If you remember back to the over one hundred thousand new images that the studio produces on a yearly basis, you'll appreciate why I slowly came [cont. on p. 17]



METROPOLITAN [cont. from p. 16]

to realize that the recreation of large sections of the archives was going to be impossible from a purely operational standpoint. But this represented only a partial gap in my comprehension.

One day, Betty Fiske, who is both paper and photographic conservator for the museum, came to the studio with a group of curators from the Egyptian Department. Because the curators were preparing to begin a series of publications on the Museum's early archaeological expeditions, they felt that it was important for me to acquaint myself with a group of 30,000 glass plate negatives which would form the pictorial foundation for this group of scholarly books. I had been essentially unaware of this particular group of negatives, because thus far in my tenure, there had been so few requests for them.

As I came to learn, this group of negatives was the record of many years of field work by the museum's egyptologists at the turn of the century. Harry Burton, a well known art photographer, had accompanied the museum staff and thoroughly documented the excavation process. What the curators were able to bring home to me was the fact that this group of negatives documented something that no longer existed. They did not consider this record material. Because the negatives were at the heart of their scholarly writing and research, they felt that the negatives had acquired artifactual value in and of themselves, particularly in light of the destruction of the original sites.

Betty brought to my attention during that meeting the fact that the storage for these negatives was severely sub-standard because of the environmental conditions in the attic that I outlined earlier. The gap in my comprehension slowly began to fill in. What I had failed to understand initially but began to understand that day was that the record photographs had a life of their own, and that when put to use in the proper way, the negatives were capable of looking through a glass darkly. For me, it was my introduction to this much smaller group of negatives

that finally began to turn on the light. It allowed me to fully appreciate for the first time the critical intersection between the contextual value of a photographic record, and archival concerns for the record itself. When I made that synaptic leap I realized that this correlation between content and conservation was something which needed to be applied across the board and as the manager of this resource, it would be my responsibility to find a way to do it. There was another singular incident which brought me to that conclusion.

The European Paintings department had requested new photography for a 15th century wood panel painting. When the artwork arrived in the studio, the chief photographer made mention of the fact that he knew that there was already existing photography of the piece. In researching the archives we discovered a glass plate negative which unfortunately had been scratched and a diacetate negative that had deteriorated. Because both the existing photographic records were damaged, we didn't question the need to rephotograph.

Upon closer inspection, we realized that time had taken an awful toll on the painting in that the wood panel had a deep split directly down the middle. When we took a second look at the old negatives, we could clearly see that the glass plate taken in the early 1900's showed the painting as it looked before the wood had begun to separate. The diacetate negative which dated to the early 1930's revealed the beginnings of the split, and fifty years later, the new photograph would reveal the much greater degree of damage.

I realized that in another fifty to a hundred years the photographic record of this painting would mean a great deal to conservators and curators. The damage of the two earlier negatives was indeed something to be lamented. This episode brought me to the awareness that there really were no categories or collections of film in the archives which the Museum could truly afford to lose.

As mentioned earlier, we can claim only partial solutions. By [cont. on p. 18]

METROPOLITAN [cont. from p. 17]

about a year and a half into my new position, I had come to realize that just about everything that could be wrong--was wrong. But almost everything that was wrong pointed back to the singular difficulties in our environment. It was clear that the entire facility was in need of renovation and not a renovation on the order of a face lift. The complexity of the environment and the interlocking nature of many of the problems demanded that the introduction of new building features aimed towards the creation of archival standards would have to begin at the micro-level of the cabinetry and extend itself all the way to the macro-level of sealing the area off from city pollution.

Concurrent with our growing awareness of the environmental and preservation problems, was our understanding that the studio's record-keeping system was also in desperate need of modernization. Over the course of eighty years, the series of log-books that were started in 1906 had mushroomed into a library of 102 volumes by 1987. We also have five different--but incomplete--cross-referenced card catalogs. Although the records had been diligently and carefully maintained, the amount of information had simply exploded beyond the bounds of the initial record-keeping methods.

As we explored solutions, through a combination of common sense and the sound example of other institutions, we decided that computerization, linked with digitized imaging, would provide access to the negative archives in a way that had never been possible before.

Thus, we reached a point where we could see that we had three predominant areas of concern: 1) the need for a computer system to cross-reference the records automatically, 2) a complete physical renovation of the facility, and 3) the need to duplicate deteriorating film in different areas of the collection.

Feasibility studies and reports were done which involved the cooperation and input of many different areas--the Buildings department, the Construction

department, curatorial and conservation departments, the staff of the Photo Studio, Kodak, and an architectural firm. Both the computer and the renovation were folded together into a single request and presented to the Museum's Finance Budget Committee as a capital project. As you might imagine, the initial price tag was staggering.

In this institution, a capital project is defined as a one-time venture that is extensive enough in its scope and cost that it cannot be funded through the annual operating budget. Hundreds of capital projects are proposed and the Budget Committee must select those few which the administration will support. Once a proposal has been slated as a capital project, the administration then commits itself to active fund-raising and development. Both the computer and the renovation projects had to be presented at the same meeting, and because of the competition for capital project slots we realized that the presentation would have to be persuasive.

We developed a two-fold approach. The presentation of the renovation project involved a hands-on demonstration of different film types, an explanation of historic photographic processes, descriptions of the content of the different negative collections, and a statement which stressed the importance of trying to save the collections from further deterioration. We felt that the problem was best illustrated by showing actual examples of damaged negatives. The process of damage and deterioration for nitrate, diacetate, and glass plate negatives is so physically destructive and immediately alarming that we hoped that the negatives would speak for themselves, and by extension speak for the renovation request. Most people outside of the Photo Studio had no overall knowledge of the amount or nature of what the archives contained, no knowledge of the history of photography, and nearly everyone was unaware of what was happening to the collection. Thus, on the assumption that seeing is believing, we felt that the demonstration would have a fairly dramatic effect.

[cont. on p. 19]

METROPOLITAN [cont. from p. 18]

At the same time, we had to communicate why we felt that we needed to acquire the computer system. We had settled on a system that we felt answered most of our requirements, but the company's laboratory was located in another part of the city, making a demonstration impossible. A verbal explanation of our different cataloging systems seemed insufficient and we felt that it wasn't feasible to bring the entire committee to the Photo Studio for a demonstration.

Our solution ended up being fairly radical at the time. We decided to make a videotape which would take the committee on a walk-through of the Photo Studio record-keeping processes, and then to the computer lab for a live demonstration of the system at work. I was able to contact a director of photography who was impressed enough by our problems and intrigued enough by the idea of trying to communicate those problems through the use of video, that with his agent's blessing, he took the project on *pro-bono*. Although humble in its way, the video-tape did everything we hoped it would do. As a result of the presentation to the Finance Budget Committee, both of the Photograph Studio's proposals were slated as capital projects by the following day.

In the long run this presentation had a more far-reaching effect. Over the course of the next ten months the same presentation was repeated on approximately fifteen different occasions--to the curatorial forum, at the Director's monthly curatorial department head's meeting, to potential corporate sponsors for the project, and culminated in a presentation to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. Two years down the road, I can honestly say that there are few people in the Museum who aren't aware of the renovation program and why it is necessary, and if there are dissenting voices we have yet to hear from them. Finding the means to get the word out and up was the single most important thing we have done.

By last year, the renovation had transformed itself into a relocation project. The Museum has embarked on a long-range master building plan which involves the reshuffling of approximately ten museum departments over the course of the next ten years. The Photo Studio is now slated to move in the fall of 1992 to its new location, gaining approximately 7000 square feet of working space and a dedicated, environmentally sound, storage room for the entire negative collection. Relocation as opposed to renovation has allowed us to cut our initial price tag in half. The capital funds which are being raised through private sources, and which we hope to match with federal grant money, will go towards the construction and preparation of the new studios and darkrooms, and the purchase of photographic equipment and new cabinetry for the negative collection. Separate monies have now been slated for the purchase of the computer system in the coming fiscal year.

Another coincidental circumstance is also worth relating. It is one of the serendipitous events which occurred, but one which another institution might think of actively pursuing. Around the time we were beginning to develop our proposal for presentation, a new trustee was named to the Museum's board. At the Metropolitan Museum, trustees, in addition to their duties on the board, will usually be aligned with a particular curatorial or conservation department to serve as a member of that department's visiting committee. This committee looks closely at the needs and requirements of an individual area and makes recommendations to address any problems.

For the first time in the Museum's history, the trustee of whom I spoke requested that he be assigned to the Operations Division. He became a visiting committee of one, so to speak. Operations is composed of twelve primary service departments and includes the Photograph Studio. As fate would have it, this new trustee had a personal interest in photography, and was able to respond immediately to the crisis. As a result, we received our first grant, which we chose to spend on building a prototype storage cabinet for glass plate negatives.

Proper storage is an issue that is difficult to pin down. There [cont. on p. 20]

METROPOLITAN [cont. from p. 19]

are endless stories about cabinets that have ended up damaging the material that they were meant to secure. We certainly have had our difficulties with wood, and have heard similar horror stories about cabinets with baked enamel finishes that were improperly cured.

Given the freedom to spend our grant in an experimental fashion, we decided that outside of stainless steel, anodized aluminum would be an ideal storage medium because its physical properties are inert. At the recommendation of the conservator at the George Eastman House, I visited the archives for the city of Paris, which houses all of its negatives in anodized aluminum containers. What I saw there impressed me. Upon returning home, we located Crystallizations, a Long Island company that specializes in Museum storage systems fabricated from anodized aluminum. They were interested in the project because they had primarily worked in storage for works of art, and felt that this project would expand their professional horizons at the same time as answering our particular needs.

The agency that awarded the grant had a particular interest in the Egyptian Expedition negatives, which I spoke about earlier, and wanted the money spent to preserve that collection. The first cabinet, which was delivered in December 1989 after a year in the making, will house approximately one third of the 30,000 negatives. Again, we hope that the project will speak for itself, and lead to further funding to build the two additional cabinets we need for the collection.

This example leads to another important point about finding an administrative approach. Our renovation project is fairly sweeping in its various components, and in reality too sweeping to be taken on as a whole. We have learned to cut away at the various components and work on them as smaller, self-contained projects without losing sight of the fact that they will eventually fold back into our larger concept of renovation and rehabilitation.

Although many individuals, organizations, or agencies would be loath to tackle a renovation of this kind as a whole, they will often be interested in some smaller element. Because you can't afford to cease your ongoing work to begin with, cutting up a project into bite-size pieces allows you to make progress that indeed may be slow, but at the same time can be sure.

Nine years ago, we systematically began pulling nitrate film from our files. It has taken a long time, but out of 14,000 existing negatives that were printable, we are down to our last 700. To our consternation, a year ago, we discovered two more caches of nitrate in separate collections which no one knew existed. With our new computer system, an incident like this might be far less likely to have happened. Of these additional 7,000 negatives which we must now print and copy or directly duplicate, we have rehoused at least half of them. Much of this work has been done through a program of high school and college interns that is administered through the Museum's Education Division.

After having David Horvath come and do a study of our diacetate stock two and a half years ago, we have slowly segregated the first 10,000 negatives and printed them. We have thousands more to do, but we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have made a start. Having found a group of 65 autochromes in the Egyptian collection, through Betty Fiske's design ingenuity, we have been able to secure them all in customized, archival housing. We've learned to accept opportunity as it comes along. Earlier in the spring, a photographic processing magazine called us about doing an article on Museum photography. The article ended up becoming the magazine's cover story, and has aided our fundraising efforts.

Rather than interrupt the primary work of the photographers, we have trained, through a workshop/seminar in Rochester at R.I.T., the first of the Museum's black and white printers to take on the work of film duplication. Not only does this help us solve the problem of capturing as many of the images on the deterior- [cont. on p. 21]

METROPOLITAN [cont. from p. 20]

rating stock as we can, but at the same time, allows us to expand and move the printers into a new area of professional knowledge and expertise. This is an example of where our larger conservation program has affected a personnel issue in a very positive fashion.

In closing, I'd like to share one more tale with you that I think best illustrates and sums up my comments by showing what can happen when conservation, storage and access issues aren't addressed administratively. In the fall of last year I visited the British Museum in London and the Chief Photographer there shared with me the following story.

Black and white record photography was begun in the British Museum in the 1870's. The British Museum is divided into approximately eight curatorial divisions with a group of staff photographers assigned to each. One of the first staff photographers was Roger Fenton. Until approximately ten years ago, each curatorial department was responsible for storing and archiving its own negatives. The current Chief Photographer decided that the negative collection should be centralized in the offices of the Photograph Studio proper. When the curatorial departments were asked to release their individual negatives, very few were forthcoming. Negatives had been misplaced, glass plates broken accidentally, other negatives had simply been thrown away or held back. The sad ending to this story is that some of the British Museum's tremendous legacy of record photography has been lost and the current staff is systematically going back and trying to replace missing images.

As you might imagine, a hundred years of photography that opens a window on the inner life of an institution's past is virtually irreplaceable on every level imaginable. A record of this kind represents the history of the specific institution and its collections by holding up a mirror that is indeed built on each individual negative, but in its entirety is greater than

the sum of its parts and impossible to recreate after the fact. But beyond the immediate concern for the loss of a mass visual record are our concerns for the loss of the early efforts of superb craftsmen such as Fenton, whose surviving work is of great value. Additionally, as we have discussed, a collection of this kind can inevitably reveal a very thorough and far-ranging representation of the working history of photography.

I suppose one could sum it up by saying that today's photographic record may well become tomorrow's artifact. It may even become tomorrow's treasure. Since there is no way to predict when or where this will be the case, in good faith, an institution must preserve within reason wherever and whenever it can.

The Metropolitan Museum's Annual Report outlines the most important and interesting new works of art acquired by each curatorial department during the previous fiscal year, illustrating the most significant acquisitions. In last year's Annual Report, the work of art chosen to illustrate the curatorial department of Prints and Photographs was a beautiful black and white reproduction of an albumen print from a wet collodion on glass negative. Indeed, the photograph's caption read as follows: "*Falls on the Llugwy*, by Roger Fenton. British, 1857."

Thus we see that yesterday's photographic records can go so far as to become tomorrow's work of art. I look at the photographers in the studio today and like to imagine that we are finding the way to securely preserve their work--because in them we are nurturing the Harry Burtons and Roger Fentons of the future.

Barbara Bridgers  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

LATE-breaking news!  
ONE proposal un-axed

"Birth of a Salesman" has been accepted for the 1990 SAA meeting in Seattle.