
MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

Newsletter of the Museum Archives Section
Society of American Archivists

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From the Chair...

MAKE IT HAPPEN--SEIZE THE DAY

Some ideas seem to find their way into a mental cranny from which they can periodically pop into our consciousness as if to say, "Don't forget! This is something you want to happen."

Sometimes the perfect opportunity comes up and you can spring into action. Other times--given the press of work and competing priorities--that intriguing idea or project just has to remain dormant until you can create an opening to set it in motion.

The perfect opportunity: Kathleen Robinson Williams (Smithsonian Archives) and I have been talking off and on for years about our mutual desire to give some serious and organized thought to appraising museum records. At SAA in San Diego, the idea and the solution finally came together. Following the Business Archives Section's example, we are planning an afternoon seminar/working group on Wednesday during the SAA meeting in Chicago. Bart Ryckbosch will host the meeting at the Art Institute of Chicago. The meeting will create a forum for experienced museum archivists to sit down and discuss the topic, with the goal of producing a "white paper" that can be published in *Museum Archivist*. Save the date! A mailing and sign up form will be sent to Section members prior to the annual meeting and the seminar will be listed in the SAA Program.

Create an opportunity: I've been in at least two committee meetings in the last year where the perceived power of "them" to make things happen--or allow things to happen--seemed to paralyze committee members. In a membership group, though, "we" are "them." Anything that we want to make happen, we can: all it takes is ideas and actions. Projects one and two--several sessions and the seminar for Chicago--are already in motion. Do you have one of those ideas in a mental cranny? Dust it off and give me a call and let's see what we can do!

Crisis or opportunity? As you will see from the minutes and the subscription notice, the Smithsonian Archives can no longer publish *Museum Archivist* or maintain the mailing list because of time and budget constraints. This is the last issue they will mail out. For SAA members, there is no problem, since the Society will send out two newsletters a year for us. The three to four hundred non-SAA members on the mailing list--our outreach to the museum profession--present a financial problem beyond the Section's budget. The Art Institute of Chicago is willing to send out the September 1997 issue this summer, but we must come up with a solution for 1998 and beyond.

First, of course, I'd like to encourage non-SAA members to join the Society and get involved in

MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

is issued twice a year by the
Museum Archives Section of SAA.

News items, letters to the editor, and comments from the
archives community are welcome.

Next deadline: June 1, 1997

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From the Chair continued

the Section. That's the easiest way to continue
getting the newsletter and will also bring you the
many other advantages of a professional
organization.

A potentially simple solution to the newsletter
problem itself would be to make *Museum
Archivist* available on a Section member's
website. Susan Fox, SAA's Executive Director,
fully supports this as an outreach tool; eventually
SAA hopes to provide a website that will provide
access to all Sections' newsletters. Until then, do
we have any volunteers to mount and maintain
Museum Archivist on their site? Please give me a
call.

Deborah Wythe
Brooklyn Museum

SECTION BUSINESS

MUSEUM ARCHIVES SECTION ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, August 31, 1996, 10:30 am-12:30 pm
San Diego, California

Section Officers Present:

Chair (Outgoing): Maureen Melton
Vice Chair (Incoming Chair): Deborah Wythe
Newsletter Editor: Paula Stewart
Program Chair for Education: Fred Calabretta
Membership Secretary: Alan Bain
Recording Secretary: Willow Powers

Maureen Melton (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,
MA) opened the meeting and the forty two
assembled members introduced themselves.

Maureen thanked Paula Stewart (Amon Carter
Museum, Fort Worth, TX) for her work on the
newsletter and encouraged section members to
submit articles, information, and news of any length.
She noted that it is a good forum to share problems,
solicit help, and ask questions.

SECTION BUSINESS

Minutes continued

Committee Reports

Program/Education: Fred Calabretta (Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, CT) mentioned that many sessions have included museum archivists as presenters and encouraged members to contribute ideas for sessions.

Membership: Alan Bain (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC) said he had tightened the mailing list to 470 names, but it had gone back up to 700. Some newsletter recipients are in SAA, but many others are not. Since 1986 the Smithsonian Institution has sent out the newsletter; it would now like to hand over the mailing to other interested institutions. Alan suggested that perhaps the American Association of Museums might contribute to this. He will provide mailing for the February newsletter; after that some other institution should take over. Cost is approximately \$400 per mailing.

Announcements from the Floor

Deb Wythe (The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY), as incoming chair, made suggestions for Section activities next year. She raised the possibility of the Section getting time from SAA to have a focused talk - a working session - about issues in Museum Archives (such as appraisal of museum records), as the Business Archives section does. She thought that before or early in the conference is preferable so it does not conflict with sessions and suggested producing a white paper at the end. Deb will work to organize this through the appropriate channels at SAA.

Deb also mentioned that Jeannie James at the Metropolitan Museum in New York held a meeting and took archivists and those responsible for archives through an exhibit at the museum as a way of enlightening them on the use of archives. Deb inquired if others in different regions had designed a

similar program and suggested they talk with her about it.

The Section will need to elect a chair elect, outreach chair, and publications chair at the 1997 annual meeting. Nominations should be submitted to Deb.

Alan Bain talked about the Smithsonian Institution's 150th anniversary. A birthday party was held on the Mall, with estimated attendance of 750,000 over two days. Tents in which programs of each division were illustrated were set up on the Mall. The Archives tent showed its contribution to: 'Your history' - genealogical research; 'Our history' - Smithsonian's historical activities; and 'combinations' where the public and staff were interviewed about their activities.

SI staff used archives extensively for all the exhibitions, and the coming year will continue the illustration of Smithsonian history, selling products. These activities, including producing a current guide to holdings, were good outreach within SI. There is concern regarding support for archives as a result of downsizing.

Alan suggested that a session on "The Politics of Celebration" would be a good idea. He had proposed one earlier but it was not accepted, and he wondered if perhaps the Section could rethink and re-present.

Deb mentioned that the finding aid for the Culin Archival Collection was finished. The collection has been arranged, preserved and described, and the finding aid is available to institutions (free) or individuals (\$8.00).

A representative from The George Meany Center, Silver Springs, MD, mentioned that there was to be a meeting of the International Association of Institutional History in Chicago in 1997 and many of those archivists will be at SAA, later at Maryland. Anyone is interested in meeting and discussing these archives and exchanging perspectives on labor history should look for more information which will be coming through the newsletter.

SECTION BUSINESS

Minutes continued

Fred Calabretta said that there would be a major exhibit on America and the Sea at the Mystic Seaport Museum. If anyone from other areas has material in collections, especially regarding areas outside New England, please contact him.

Mary Elizabeth Ruwell announced that the next meeting of the American Association for State and Local History will take place in Denver in the fall of 1997. Anyone with ideas for that meeting should contact her [719-598-7820; email: 102504.2742@compuserve.com]. The program committee will meet in December.

Instead of breaking into the three committees for discussion as has been done in past section meetings, the group remained together to discuss publication ideas and sessions proposals.

Publications: Maureen lead a discussion about a small publication or pamphlet presenting the value of museum archives. The idea has been talked about many times. Kris Haglund (Denver Museum of Natural History, Denver, CO) said she had seen a very nice brochure that listed materials in archives highlighted the importance of archives on the outside. It was both substantive and promotional. She noted that a brochure needs to be redone frequently to keep it up to date. The discussion ranged on what the audience might be, noting the importance of addressing a specific audience. Two groups were identified: directors and those who funded archives and those who came to ask how to set up an archives. A list of resources might be useful for the latter, although it was acknowledged that a brochure could hardly address the question adequately. Regarding a brochure directed at museum administrators, there was much discussion on usefulness, approach, marketing, appearance, contents. There was general agreement that a simple resource list could be inexpensively produced for those who asked questions about archives and a more 'flashy' brochure might be useful for attracting the attention and resources of administrators.

A plan of action was drawn up: Maygene Daniels (National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC), and Marisa Keller (Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC) will work on ideas for the resource flyer; Kathleen Robinson (Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, DC), and Deb Wythe will work on ideas for the brochure for administrators. Drafts will be circulated to section members either by newsletter or email.

Session proposals for 1997 annual meeting in Chicago: The first idea discussed was a session on the activities and/or politics of celebration: how it was done, the planning and exhibits; how it was recorded; or what effect it had.

Secondly, a session on both old and new Museum architecture was suggested. Mark Coier (Cranborough) was interested in chairing this. Issues for session topics included format of the materials, and how to get the originals from architects. Donna DiMichele offered to contribute ideas from the new Mashantucket Pequot Museum.

Thirdly, a joint session with the Visual Materials Section on 'Collective Memory' - how communities remember - was suggested. Micki Ryan will approach the Visual Materials people.

Fourthly, a session on anthropological records and the Council for the Preservation of the Anthropological Records activities and ideas was suggested. Mary Elizabeth Ruwell said she would put this together, with help from Donna DiMichele (Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Connecticut) and Willow Powers (Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, NM).

This brought the Section meeting to a close.

Willow Powers
Laboratory of Anthropology

SECTION BUSINESS

From the Editor

I hope that the spring thaw will have begun by the time this edition reaches you. It has been a busy six months. As always, I want to thank the contributors to this edition--we could not have a newsletter without you--and to encourage everyone else to write something for inclusion in a future edition.

At the end of this edition, you will find an index to Volumes 6 through 10 (1992-96) of *Museum Archivist*. Thanks to Deb Wythe for preparing this useful resource!

As Deb noted in her "From the Chair..." column and as noted in the minutes of the Section meeting at the SAA Annual Meeting, the Smithsonian Archives will not be publishing the newsletter after this edition. On behalf of the Section members and all *Museum Archivist* recipients, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Smithsonian, Alan Bain, and everyone who helped publish the newsletter and maintain the mailing list for the past 10 years. They have done a spectacular job, many times in the face of adversity. For example: The September issue actually is mailed in early August so it will reach section members before the annual meeting. Last July Alan was preparing for the big 150th anniversary celebration at the Smithsonian. He had only one weekend where he could print and mail out the newsletter. I sent the copy by Federal Express in time for it to reach Alan several days before the weekend; however, it did not arrive until the next week. I was positive the edition would not be out before the annual meeting, but there it was in my mail a couple weeks later.

We now are exploring other options for making the newsletter available to non-section members. If you can help in this by copying and mailing the newsletter for one or many issues or if you have another suggestion about distribution, please contact Deb.

I still am looking for someone to act as an assistant editor. Duties are soliciting articles from section members and proofreading articles. This is a perfect opportunity to become more involved in the Section. If you are interested, contact me.

Paula Stewart
Amon Carter Museum

MEETINGS

ASC 1997 Annual Meeting Announced

The 1997 Association of Systematics Collections (ASC) Annual Meeting will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 24-26. The meeting will immediately precede the 1997 meeting of the American Association of Museums (AAM). The meeting will be held jointly for the first time with the Association of Science Museum Directors (ASMD).

The theme of the meeting, "The Collections-Based Mission of Natural History Collections," is meant to focus on the core mission of institutions with natural history collections: maintaining those collections for use in research and the education of a broad public constituency. The connection between the collections, research derived from the collections, and public programming will be explored by several nationally-known speakers and will be the subject of a workshop session co-sponsored by the AAM Education Committee. The workshop will serve as the initial activity of ASC's new Informal Education Committee. Anyone interested in joining the committee may attend. We hope that the committee will have strong liaison among AAM's Education Committee and other groups such as the Association of Science and Technology Centers (ASTC).

In addition to the theme session and workshop, there will be two other short sessions. One will complete discussion of ASC's strategic plan, prior to a vote on the plan at ASC's business

meeting. Another will bring telecommunications and database experts from outside the systematics collections community to provide a better context in which to discuss database needs and progress. Each of the four sessions will last 1/2 day.

Registration forms and information on hotels is available from ASC. ASC representatives will receive information in the mail. Others may contact ASC at 1725 K Street NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20006-1401; telephone: 202-835-9050; fax: 202-835-7334; email: asc@ascoll.org; or web site: www.ascoll.org.

WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

Museum and Library Archives Institute Scheduled for June

The first annual Museum and Library Archives Institute, sponsored by the Emily Williston Memorial Library & Museum, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, and the New England Museum Association, will be held at the Williston Northampton School, Easthampton, Massachusetts, on June 20-21, 1997. This Institute is directed toward those who have responsibility for museum and library records and special collections, but limited experience in archival methods and procedures. This year's curriculum includes such topics as appraising and scheduling, arrangement and description, architectural records, reference and access, copyright, automation, photographs, and the organization of special collections.

The Institute will be hosted by the Williston Northampton School, a coeducational boarding and day school for students from the seventh grade through post-graduate year. The 156 year-old school is adjacent to the Emily Williston Memorial Library and is located in the heart of the Pioneer Valley of the Connecticut River

Mount Holyoke, and Hampshire colleges, and the University of Massachusetts.

Participants in the program qualify for 1.2 CEU credits. For information, contact Theresa Rini Percy, Director, Emily Williston Memorial Library & Museum, 9 Park Street, Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027; telephone: 413-527-1031; fax: 413-527-3765.

CCAHA Announces 1997 Workshops

The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) announce the following daylong workshops to be held in 1997, with the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, and the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation.

◆ Instituting a Conservation Environment Monitoring Program

May 5, 1997: Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center, Pittsburgh, PA

September 23, 1997: The Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, PA

Speaker: William P. Lull, principal and senior conservation environment consultant of Garrison/Lull Inc., Princeton Junction, NJ, and co-author of *Conservation Environment Guidelines for Libraries and Archives*

Cost: \$50.00, including a box lunch and supplementary materials

◆ Have You Got the Blues: Architectural Records: Their Identification, Management, Storage, and Treatment

June 3, 1997: The Octagon, The Museum of The American Architectural Foundation, Washington, DC

WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

CCAHA Workshop continued

November 5, 1997: Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, NY

Speakers: Lois Olcott Price, Conservator of Library Collections, Winterthur Library; Joan Irving, Conservator, Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts

Cost: \$75.00, including supplementary materials. Registration will be limited to 30.

For additional information and a registration form, contact Susan W. DuBois, Preservation Services Office, CCAHA, 264 South 23rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103; telephone: 215-545-0613; fax: 215-735-9313; email: ccaaha@shrsys.hslc.org.

NEWS, NOTES, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CCAHA Offers Surveys at Reduced Rate

The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) is offering preservation overview surveys of paper-based collections at a greatly reduced rate, thanks to the generosity of the National Endowment for the Humanities, The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, and the Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation. For \$300 and travel expenses, you can receive a full day's review of the preservation efforts of your institution and an extensive report with suggestions for improvement.

The survey encompasses a general evaluation of your institution's preservation needs: environment, housekeeping, pest control, fire protection, security, and disaster preparedness; collection storage, handling, exhibition, and treatment; and preservation planning. The site visit consists of a review of the site, an examination of the collection, and interviews with relevant staff, including those responsible for

collection care, the physical plant, and building maintenance; and security to identify fully your preservation needs. The report provides observations and recommendations to serve as a guide in the development of a comprehensive preservation plan for your paper-based collections.

Institutions with paper-based humanities collections available to the public are eligible to be considered for participation. Preference is given to institutions with collections that are either unique or of significant value to the study and understanding of the humanities, that can make a commitment to developing and implementing a long-range preservation plan and have an individual staff member or volunteer willing to assume responsibility for preservation duties, and are in the Mid-Atlantic region, although institutions in other areas are encouraged to apply.

To request an application form or additional information, contact Preservation Services Office, CCAHA, 264 South 23rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103; telephone: 215-545-0613; fax: 215-735-9313; email: ccaaha@shrsys.hslc.org.

President Signs Museum and Library Services Act

On September 30, 1996 the President approved legislation creating an Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Enactment of H.R. 4278 establishes IMLS to improve museum, library, and information services. It consolidates federal programs of support for museums administered by the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) and support for public libraries administered by the Department of Education. The legislation took effect in fiscal year 1997 (beginning October 1, 1996).

Under this legislation the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) will add to its responsibilities the new role of advising IMLS on general policy related to financial assistance for library services.

NEWS, NOTES, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Museum and Library Services Act continued

The National Museum Services Board will continue to provide policy advice on museum programs.

Speaking about the newly established IMLS, Diane B. Frankel, IMS Director and the new IMLS Director, said, "This new agency sends a strong signal about the contribution museums and libraries make to education and to communities across the country. I look forward to working with libraries and museums to ensure that the tremendous power they have to enrich our lives is realized."

Some provisions of the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996 include:

- Authorization for \$150 million for libraries and \$2.7 million for museums. (Note: Funds for libraries and museum continue to be appropriated by different Congressional committees.)
- Continuation of museum programs to encourage and assist museums in their educational role.
- Renew and reorganize the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and Title II of the Higher Education Act in the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA).
- Establish a director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services with a four year term who will alternate between persons from library and museum backgrounds.
- Establish two deputy directors: one for the Office of Museum Services and one for the Office of Library Services.

For more information, contact IMLS Public Affairs Contact Tania Said at 202-606-4646; email: tsaid@ims.fed.us.

PADA Establishes System for Reporting Missing Manuscripts

The Professional Autograph Dealers Association (PADA) has established a system for reporting stolen or missing manuscripts to its membership, allowing libraries and archives to alert dealers to possibly illegal transactions. The system includes an alert network for reporting newly discovered losses and a database to register missing manuscript materials.

To report a newly discovered loss, call 888-338-4338 (toll free) and PADA will immediately notify its membership by fax or telephone. Provide as much information as possible: a detailed description of the material stolen; the date and circumstances of the loss; the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the contact person at the institution; and any law enforcement officers involved.

To register an older loss in the database, mail a detailed description of the materials, with any of the information listed above, to Catherine Barnes, head of PADA's Security Committee, P.O. Box 30117, Philadelphia, PA 19103. Please do not use the toll-free number to report older losses.

At the present, the information collected is available only to PADA members, but it may be offered to non-members on a subscription basis in the future. The service if offered free to reporting institutions.

PUBLICATIONS

Guide to Smithsonian Archives 1996 Published

As part of the Smithsonian's 150th birthday observance, the Smithsonian Institution Archives is proud to offer a new edition of the *Guide to the Smithsonian Archives*. This new, greatly expanded edition supersedes the 1983 *Guide*, which has now been long out of print. A brief description of *Guide* follows:

PUBLICATIONS

Smithsonian Guide continued

The Archives is responsible for collecting and preserving the official records of the Institution, the papers of scientific and other staff, and the records of related organizations. Holdings constitute a valuable resource for scholars working in the history of science, especially nineteenth-century American science, American history, art history, and other areas of Smithsonian interest.

Records: The official records of the Smithsonian document institutional history and the role of the Institution in the growth of the nation. Through its official programs and the varied pursuits of the secretaries and curators, the Smithsonian has been involved in American intellectual, cultural, and technological life since its founding in 1846. Important nineteenth-century material includes records concerning early surveys of the West and other expeditions, records of the meteorological program which formed the basis for the Weather Bureau of the United States Signal Service, records concerning the Office of the United States Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries, and records of American participation in international expositions. Twentieth-century materials include records documenting the Smithsonian's growth in the fields of art, history, tropical biology, and astrophysics, records of the National Zoological Park, and records documenting the administration of and major exhibitions at the National Museum of American History, the Hirshhorn Museum, the Anacostia Museum, and other long-standing and emerging Smithsonian museums. In addition, the Archives has an excellent collection of architectural drawings and records from non-museum components of the Institution, such as The Smithsonian Associates, the Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies, and the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory.

Special Collections: The manuscript collections held by the Archives consist of the papers of the secretaries, curators, and other staff members, as

well as the records of a number of professional organizations and societies that have named the Smithsonian as the official repository for their records. Of particular interest are papers of Joseph Henry, documenting electrical research; Spencer F. Baird's voluminous correspondence with American naturalists; Samuel P. Langley's manuscripts on early experiments in flight; Charles D. Walcott's paleontological correspondence; Charles G. Abbot's correspondence concerning his research on solar radiation; and papers that document the ornithological career of Alexander Wetmore. Other materials of interest include field reports of the Fish and Wildlife Service, some records of the United States Exploring Expedition, papers tracing the Smithsonian's support of Robert Goddard's early rocket experiment, and the papers of Joseph H. Hirshhorn. Holdings of professional societies include the records of the American Association of Museums, Washington Conservation Guild, American Ornithologists' Union, the Society of Systematic Zoology, and the Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States, Inc. Other resources includes a collection of photographs, which is particularly strong in Smithsonian history, and several biographical files.

Video and Oral History: Supplementing the records and papers in the Archives are both video and oral history materials. Beginning in 1974, taped interviews with key administrative and scholarly staff have been conducted, and from the outset this program has provided an invaluable added dimension to the holdings of the Archives.

The Smithsonian Videohistory Program, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation from 1986 to 1992, used videotape in historical research. The experimental program recorded projects that reflected the Institution's concern with the conduct of contemporary science and technology. Eighteen Smithsonian historians participated in the program to document visual aspects of their on-going historical research. Projects covered topics in the physical and biological sciences as well as in technological design and manufacture.

PUBLICATIONS

Smithsonian Guide continued

Among the videohistory topics included are black aviators, the conservation of endangered species, the Manhattan Project, robotics, and the Waltham Clock Company.

Copies of the *Guide* can be purchased for \$24.95, plus shipping and handling (4th class @ \$4.24 each; priority mail @ \$7.00 each). Please order from Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order, 414 Hungerford Drive, Suite 444, Rockville, MD 20850; by toll-free telephone at 1-800-410-9815; by telephone at 301-443-2314; by fax at 301-442-1819; by email: folkways@aol.com; by Internet: <http://www.si.edu/folkways>. Discover, MasterCard, and Visa credit cards are accepted on all orders. All other payments must be made in U.S. dollars or checks payable on U.S. banks. Institutional money orders also are accepted.

Brooklyn Museum Creates Guide to Culin Archival Collection

The Brooklyn Museum has created a guide to the Culin Archival Collection, which contains the records of Stewart Culin, the Museum's first Curator of Ethnology (1903-1929). The guide, which significantly increases access to the archival holdings, as well as those of other repositories, was made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Division of Preservation and Access.

During his many decades of collecting and researching in the United States, Eastern Europe, Asia, and other areas, Stewart Culin assembled extensive documentary textual and visual materials. Among them is a series of field journal that he kept of his travels in the American Southwest. These journals describe in unusual detail his encounters with a broad range of Native Americans and include information on the cost of objects purchased, as well as evocative descriptions of the landscape.

The Culin Archival Collection is a critical resource for the study of cultural anthropology, art, and cultural history, costumes and textiles, and folklore. The guide is available through The Brooklyn Museum Library, 200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238-6052.

REPORTS

Establishing an Archives at the Royal Botanical Gardens

[Clarece Martin's article in the September 1996 issue prompted Marie Minaker to write the following article. She thought—and quite correctly, too—that there might be other small archives with similar funding problems. You may contact Marie at Auxiliary of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario, L8N 3H8.]

The Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada is a living museum of plants. How does one become an archivist for such an institution when there never has been any money budgeted for an archivist?

This is a story about the work of many volunteers. I spent several years on the Board of Directors, chaired various committees, and became President of the Auxiliary. The Auxiliary is a volunteer group, autonomous from RBG, dedicated to serving and promoting RBG. Following that, I began to write a history of the Auxiliary. The frustration of researching material for the history led me to becoming the Auxiliary Archivist.

In 1992 the Auxiliary Executive decided to fund a community college archives course for me so that the work would be done properly. Afterwards, the Hamilton Library Special Collections Archivist offered to act as a mentor. Then, funded partly by the Auxiliary, I attended archives conferences and read any materials I could find to expand my knowledge about archives.

REPORTS

RBG Archives continued

While attending botanical garden volunteer conferences, I visited the Troup County Archives in Georgia and the Huntington Library in California. Working as a volunteer, often at home, I prepared a finding aid and filled two metal cabinets with papers and memorabilia. Now, I am educating each executive member about the importance of archives and passing worthwhile material to me.

In 1993, due to RBG's financial difficulties, the library staff was reduced. The RBG Head Librarian/Curator for the Centre for Canadian Historical Horticultural Studies (CCHHS), had to shelve plans to hire a part-time archivist. Instead, she asked me if I'd become the Archivist/Volunteer for RBG itself.

Under her supervision, I processed eleven linear meters of papers, ephemera, photographs, and

slides related to the CCHHS. I also prepared finding aids for these.

Again, in 1995, due to deeper funding cuts, the library staff was reduced to one part-time librarian, an occasional student, and volunteers.

Since the 1970s, the Head Librarian had squirreled away RBG's historical material, dating from 1930, in filing cabinets, a metal storage cabinet, and numerous boxes. With the future of this material in jeopardy, the Auxiliary generously offered me a small budget for materials to begin processing this material. I work two mornings a week at this and discover something new each time I am here, including the procedures required for obtaining a "Royal" designation.

The library recently has acquired a new computer and Inmagic DB/TextWorks software. In time, the librarian will show me how to use this for RBG's archives.

Marie Minaker
Royal Botanical Gardens

Your article could have been here. Why not write something for the next edition?

The deadline for the September issue has been changed. The new deadline is June 1.