

MUSEUM ARCHIVIST

Newsletter of the Museum Archives Section Society of American Archivists

February 1998

Volume 12 Number 1

From the (lawn) Chair...

...ramblings of an archival gardener

I've been thinking about appraisal a lot lately. Partly because of the Section working group last August, but mostly because of the shrinking space in our storeroom and the increasing volume of records coming through the door. The volume of paper created in a few years' work by one person is astonishing; multiplied by a staff of two hundred fifty, it is overwhelming. Now that there has been an archives at the Brooklyn Museum of Art for more than a decade, the era of "natural selection" has ended and the responsibility is squarely on my shoulders. Most of the older records are in the Archives by now--the boxes that come through the doors now are recently inactive files, filled with multiple copies (the joy of photo-copiers), draft after draft (the joy of word processing), and reference materials and research notes to back everything up (that photocopier again). How to cope? Do we need it all? Could we even house it all?

A report on the appraisal working group appears later in this issue of *Museum Archivist*, and we will continue the project at the Orlando annual meeting. What struck me most strongly in our discussion was the contrast between theory and practice. Large institutions like the National Archives must select and reject huge groups of records. (If the Brooklyn Museum of Art were a federal agency, along with hundreds of other museums, would they keep our records?) In museum archives, our universe of records is tiny, compared to the government or even a large university; the BMA Archives totals 1600 linear feet, including scheduled records. Selecting the core records is usually easy; director's files, exhibition records, trustee's minutes are accepted as a whole without many qualms. This strikes me as appraisal by the book. However, once we get to the less obvious records--marketing, public programs, facilities, for example--we face a dilemma. Larger institutions would probably simply reject these housekeeping records. We can't bear to throw them out wholesale (what if? what if?), but we also don't have the space to store them, let alone the staff to process them. We face the people who created these records on a daily basis. How can we tell them that their records don't have permanent value? We are drawn to what I would call microappraisal. Others might call it weeding.

I have grabbed onto this lifeline in self preservation when dealing with administrative (except executive administration), program, housekeeping, and facilities records and was pleased and relieved to find like-minded museum archivists at our meeting in Chicago. When records come to the BMA Archives they are generally at least five years old. Many are scheduled in our records management program, but a good portion of administrative records are a mixed bag--no clear series--that defy scheduling. Part of my accessioning process is now a detailed pass through the boxes to discard the obvious. Staff members are told about this process ahead of time and sometimes (rarely) request that I return any unwanted materials to the department. A memo attached to the accession form lists the types of materials discarded or transferred to existing

collections (such as ephemeral publications, minutes, the library). We have preliminary appraisal guidelines for various types of records, identifying what will be discarded.

This seems to be working. I can generally reduce accessions by at least 25%, sometimes more; the process adds a few hours to accessioning but saves shelf space permanently. So far, we have not had any call for materials that were discarded. (Indeed, the records that are being weeded are administrative records that are rarely called for, except by the creating department.) When the records are eventually processed, we can refine the files even more by defining core documentation for each museum activity and selecting materials that fit those criteria. This process was developed very slowly (I certainly would not have felt competent to discard materials in my first few years as archivist) and documented each step of the way in procedures files and on accession records.

The chance to communicate with others working under similar circumstances that we experienced in the appraisal working group brought out issues that many of us have struggled with in isolation. I hope our continuing work will help all of us move toward logical selection for the records of our institutions. For every 'weed' pulled, there will be more room on the shelf for another box of the good stuff and less puzzlement and drudge work for the people who take over where we left off.

I'll look forward to seeing many of you in Orlando, where we'll continue our discussion of giving up keeping things 'just in case,' relying instead on establishing logical documentation strategies and clear procedures.

Deborah Wythe
Brooklyn Museum of Art

SECTION BUSINESS

**Museum Archives Section
Annual Meeting
Saturday, August 30, 1997
10:30 am-12:30 pm
Chicago, IL**

Section Officers Present:

Chair: Deborah Wythe
Newsletter Editor: Paula Stewart
Recording Secretary: Marisa Keller

Deborah Wythe (Brooklyn Museum of Art) called the meeting to order at 10:30 am and welcomed the approximately 50 attendees.

Deb then introduced Lynda DeLoach, who is serving on the Program Committee for the 1998 meeting, to be held in Orlando, Florida. Lynda reported that program session proposal forms are

available and, although there is no overall theme to the meeting, there are several issues that could be addressed in sessions (recreation and leisure, sports, and others). She wanted the Section members to be aware that the sessions will be reduced from the usual two hours to one and a half hours in order to promote more interaction among archivists. Attendees at the Orlando meeting will be encouraged to dress casually. She reminded those submitting session proposals that the Program Committee encourages people to make sure proposals are complete since the Committee does not consider incomplete proposals.

Deb then asked everyone to introduce themselves, giving their name and institutional affiliation.

Karen Jefferson, a representative from SAA Council, reported that Council is looking into a reorganization of the section/roundtable structure and more will be forthcoming on this issue. There are three new SAA Task Forces: the Task Force on Diversity, the Task Force on Dues and Member Benefits, and the Task Force on the SAA Annual Meeting. She stressed the need for input from SAA members on all these issues.

Deb then turned the meeting to a discussion of SAA's publishing priorities. Laurie Baty (NHPRC), who serves on the Publication Board, reported that there is an active publishing program. The Board was asked to examine a list of SAA materials published since 1977 that are still in print for possible projects. Laurie had selected *Museum Archives* by William Deiss and asked if the Section felt it necessary to reissue the publication. Laurie stated that David Bearman had been suggested as a possible author of a new museum archives publication. The general consensus among Section members was that a new manual should be written and that a Section member should write it. Maygene Daniels (National Gallery of Art) has expressed an interest in writing a book of this nature, and she will pursue the project with SAA. Laurie will report to the Publications Board by December 30, 1997.

Moving to the *Museum Archivist*, Deb thanked Paula Stewart (Amon Carter Museum) for her hard work and Bart Ryckbosch (Art Institute of Chicago) for mailing the last issue of the newsletter to non-SAA members. The Art Institute has agreed to publish the newsletter. Paula thanked everyone who had submitted news and articles for the newsletter and asked for submissions for upcoming issues.

A discussion of the structure of the Section and how annual meetings are conducted resulted in the determination that the entire Section's discussion of issues (the format used at the 1996 annual meeting) is more productive than dividing into the traditional 3 working groups for discussions.

Elections for the two positions to be filled, Vice Chair/Chair Elect and Education Chair/Session Shepherd, were postponed until the end of the meeting so people could get to know each other and could consider volunteering for a position.

After some discussion the Section decided to pursue the following activities:

1. Submit session proposals. Sarah Demb (Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University) volunteered to be Education Chair and be responsible for submitting

proposals. Session topics for consideration included art collectors; historic sites, architecture, and restoration (a reworking of last year's submission on museum architecture); institutional visions/purposes vs. realities (changes in communities and purposes of museums); leisure activity museums, possibly spotlighting the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, a racing museum, and a boating museum; marketing and popularization (with the Performing Arts Section); what to do with art in an archives; descriptions of artifacts (with the Description Section); and Popular Culture: Andy, Marilyn, Elvis, Mickey, and Pocahontas.

2. Review the "draft guidelines for museum archives" with an eye towards revising and publishing them with the Section's endorsement. Mary Elizabeth Ruwell (Pikes Peak Auto Hill Climb Museum), Polly Darnell (Shelburne Museum), Paula Stewart, and Deb Wythe will work on this.

3. Creating a museum archives listserv. Sarah Demb and Deb Wythe will work on this.

4. Organize another working group to be held at the 1998 meeting. The topic will be Appraisal, Part 2.

5. Work on updating the Museum Archives Section directory. Determine who will fund production/mailing.

Donna Longa DiMichele showed a video of the new Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Cultural Center, which is scheduled to open June 1, 1998.

New officers were elected: Ann Marie Przybyla (Cleveland Museum of Art), Vice Chair/Chair Elect and Sarah Demb, Education Chair/Program Shepherd.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30

Marisa Keller
The Corcoran Gallery

From the Editor

Lots of great things are happening for the Section. My big news is that the Heritage Forum on the Canadian Heritage Information Network currently is hosting the newsletter on the CHIN website. You can access it at <http://www.chin.gc.ca/Resources/Forum/e_forum.html>. The newsletter remains in "Feature Articles" for 15 days after it is loaded and then moves to "Newsletter" under "Resources" after that. The September 1997 issue and this issue are loaded. (You'll notice a difference between them. September was a test from which I gained some valuable experience.)

The Section thanks CHIN for making this resource available. I would like to add special thanks to Wendy A. Thomas, Project Director, Heritage Forum, who informed Deb of the site and then

walked me through the process of loading the newsletter. The September issue was loaded in less than 20 minutes (instruction time included!) and required no special reformatting.

The Heritage Forum is one of the professional resources offered on the Canadian Heritage Information Network. I've done some exploration and have seen nowhere near all of the materials they offer. Be sure to check it out.

Paula Stewart
Amon Carter Museum

Museum Archives Section Session Proposals For Orlando

The Museum Archives Section had a great brain-storming session in Chicago and submitted the following session proposals for the SAA Annual Meeting in Orlando, August 1998:

"Archives for Champions:" This session will discuss preservation and outreach using examples from baseball, yachting, and car racing collections. Museum archivists will talk about the influence of collectors in setting outreach priorities. A conservator will talk about preservation priorities using examples from his work with baseball collections. All speakers will use great slides. Participants: Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, PikesPeak Auto Hill Climb Museum; Gary Albright, Northeast Document Conservation Center; Fred Calebretta, Mystic Seaport Museum.

"Architectural Records and Institutional Profiles: Assessing Changes as Organizations Evolve" (co-sponsored by the Architectural Records Roundtable): Architectural records can be used to understand how institutional profiles and values are expressed, and, more to the point, to understand how they are redefined. Changes in institutional profile are often expressed through a reconfiguration of the landscape space and physical fabric of the buildings of the Institution. Using museums as case studies, the participants will show how--through the use of architectural records--one can understand the ways that institutions define and redefine their public profile. Participants: Paul Theerman, Smithsonian Institution, Chair; Polly C. Darnell, Shelburne Museum; Jonathan Dembo, Cincinnati Museum Center; Ann Marie Przybyla, Cleveland Museum of Art. [*Editor's note: We have learned that this proposal has been accepted.*]

"Diamonds in the Rough: Documenting the Collection of Fine Art:" This session will highlight and explore the art related papers in the manuscript collections of three prominent Americans: William Wilson Corcoran (1798-1888), Henry Clay Frick (1849-1919), and Nelson A. Rockefeller (1908-1979). In addition to their well-known achievements, each also amassed large and important art collections. A great deal of the documentary sources not only records personal dealings with the art world, but also relationships with artists and dealers, as well as other well-known collectors. We intend to explore the diversity and depth of these documents and how they relate to scholarly research and the papers' impact on the area of art and patronage as well as those of the individuals they represent. Participants: Maureen Melton, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Chair; John LeGloahec, Rockefeller Archive Center; Marisa Keller, Corcoran Gallery of Art; Steve Hussman, The Frick Art and Historical Center. [*Editor's note: We have learned that this proposal has been accepted.*]

"Art in the Archives: Procedure and Policy:" The session will be presented in two parts. The first, led by a conservator, will give practical advice on caring for the art in archival collections. The second, led by an experienced archivist, will present insight into making policy decisions. The purpose of the session is to help archivists manage works of art, particularly non-paper based materials, found in archives. Participants: Susan Koutsky, The National Museum of Woman in the Arts, Chair; Alexandra Klingelhofer, Museum of Arts and Sciences; Paula Stewart, Amon Carter Museum.

Sarah R. Demb
Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University

Museum Archives Section Listserv Up And Running

The Museum Archives Section now has a listserv open to all who wish to join our on-going discussions. It is our hope that the listserv will make it possible for a greater number of archivists and other persons interested in museum archives to join in a dialogue. The unmoderated list is managed by Sarah R. Demb, Museum Archivist at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

To subscribe to SAAMUS-LIST send a message to <majordomo@fas.harvard.edu>. The message should read "subscribe [your email address] SAAMUS-LIST". Postings to the list should be mailed to <saamus-list@fas.harvard.edu>.

We look forward to your posts!

Sarah R. Demb
Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Harvard University

Volunteers Needed

Looking for a way to be more involved in the Section and get to know your colleagues? Here's your chance! We need volunteers to update the Museum Archives Section directory. Responsibilities include compiling the information and printing and mailing the directory. Contact Deb Wythe for more information.

NEWS, NOTES, & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prospect Park Archive Receives Award

The Archivists' Roundtable of Metro New York recently awarded Prospect Park Alliance for its innovative use of an archives and its application of archival resources toward restoration of the Park's original landscape design.

Historic photographs, maps, and text from letters by Frederick Law Olmsted have been used in the reconstruction of rustic bridges, deteriorated waterfalls, and historic vistas within the Park's woodlands. Prospect Park Alliance President Tupper Thomas said, "The archive has played a crucial role in the restoration of Prospect Park's landscape. We're honored to receive this recognition as we embark on creating a resource that has proven to have significant value for the Park's designers, as well as for the general public." Past awardees in this category include Henry Hampton, Executive Producer of the documentary film *Eyes on the Prize*, and Ruth Abram of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

The Prospect Park Alliance Archive was underwritten by Einhorn & Company and is maintained through funds generated by Prospect Park Alliance annual membership dues. For additional information, see the website at <www.prospectpark.org>.

from a press release

Institutional Anniversaries Discussed at Archives Conference

A session entitled "Celebrating Institutional Anniversaries" was on the program for the Fall, 1997 Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference in Wilmington, DE. Speakers presented case histories of three recently concluded celebrations. Charles St. Vil, of the New York Times Company, reported that the net effect of the work done for the celebration, and its accompanying materials, brought about needed and hoped-for change in staff attitudes. The Archives are now appreciated as a valuable information provider, rather than a static custodial department. Use of the Archives has increased. Activities described included a publication, and a picnic for the staff on 42nd St. Collaborative exhibitions were held at the Museum of Modern Art, the Pierpont Morgan Library, the New York Public Library, and the American Museum of Natural History.

John Panter, of Trinity Church of the City of New York, reported that the church planned a tercentenary celebration with the goals of giving something back to the original grantor (the Church of England) and to other Episcopalian churches. He emphasized the importance of a strong mission statement for the project before commencing. Several specific activities described were a publication on the church and its building, a "Book of Days," and a time capsule.

Gino Francesconi, of Carnegie Hall, described how the building renovations of the late 1980s were a catalyst for the foundation of the Archives. As it became clear that valuable information could be found in archival material such as programs, concert schedules, and architectural drawings, the need for a single repository for these items was recognized. The Public Relations officer, seeing that an archivist could build and maintain such a collection, was instrumental in publicizing its needs. Donations came in from many sources, and the Hall's history was saved.

Cheryl Leibold

Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Summer 1998 Marks Annual Native American Celebration at Regional Museum

The Museum of Northern Arizona announces the 1998 schedule for its annual Heritage Program, a summer celebration honoring the creativity of Native American artists of the Colorado Plateau and offering visitors the opportunity to experience these cultures. The Heritage Program is May 23 through September 14, 1998. During the opening weekend of the Program, the Museum will have its third annual Spring Youth Arts Celebration. Other special events include a special changing sales exhibit, *Enduring Creations: Masterworks of Native American Art*, and Native American Marketplaces.

For additional information contact Michele Madril at 520-774-5211, x216 or access the museum's web site in early 1998 at <mna.mus.az.us>.

from a press release

Process: Documentation & Fragments From The Mattress Factory Archives

The Mattress Factory announces a new exhibition, "Process: Documentation & Fragments from the Mattress Factory Archives," showing through March 22, 1998, in its satellite gallery at 1414 Monterey Street. This exhibition occupies all three floors of the converted turn-of-the-century grocery store, which is nestled in the historic Mexican War Streets of Pittsburgh's North Side.

Through an arrangement of objects, models, sketches, artists' handwritten notes, materials lists, and photographic documentation, "Process" reveals the working methods of 33 of the over 100 artists who have created installation works at the Mattress Factory in the 20 years since the museum's inception. The exhibition constructs an historical view of the Mattress Factory as a site for working artists and presents a "behind the scenes" view of the process through which finished art works are created.

Accompanying documentation--books, binders, exhibition guides, videotapes of artists working, and a touchscreen computer guide to the museum's past works--is provided for visitors' exploration. Some of the fragments in "Process" include: muddy shorts from Kim Jones "Mudman" (1990) performance; preliminary sketches and snapshots for Greer Lankton's "It's all about ME, Not You" (1996); handwritten instructions for the care and feeding of live canaries in Ann Hamilton's "offering" (1991); the random schematic used to dictate the daily rearrangement of 48 wall-hung works and 6 chairs over 103 days in John Cage's "changing installation at the mattress factory" (1991); and a videotape showing Meg Webster and Mattress Factory staff constructing Webster's "Untitled" installation (1984), during which the surprise collapse of a large earthen sculpture being built inside the gallery forces the artist to modify her original plans.

Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. -5 p.m., and Sundays from 1-5 p.m.. For more information please call 412-231-3169 or visit <www.mattress.org> on the world wide web.

from a press release

REPORTS

MOMA Oral History Program Progress Report

In 1991 the Museum Archivist announced the award of a grant to The Museum of Modern Art for the creation of an Oral History Program. The Program is conducted under the auspices of the Museum Archives and is continuing with great success.

The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Program was established in 1990 with support provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Estate of Morris Leverton. Having completed its initial objective to produce forty interviews documenting the history of the institution and its profound influence on twentieth-century art and culture, the program continues, thanks to generous contributions from other sources, including the Museum's Contemporary Arts Council, the Trustee Committee on Archives, Library, and Research Support, and Trustee Joanne Stern.

The Chief Archivist was inspired to create an oral history program after attending an SAA workshop, "Oral History in the Archives - An Introduction" in 1987, co-moderated by James E. Fogerty of the Minnesota Historical Society, and reading his article "Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives." (*American Archivist*. v.46, n.2, Spring 1983)

The goal of the program has been to supplement and complement the Museum Archives' rich documentary holdings with first-hand observations, recollections, and reflections of people who have long been closely associated with the Museum. Taken together, documentary material and the more private histories of individuals enrich and inform each other and add invaluable depth to the historical record. The Museum of Modern Art Oral History Program has added a unique body of material to the history of twentieth-century art and provides the foundation for future analysis of American culture and its institutions.

The program operates as follows: A professional oral historian, hired as part of the original grant, works with the Chief Archivist compiling a series of questions for the interviewee that are designed to trace the historical role of the Museum and its activities in the twentieth century. The goal is to have each interviewee respond as freely as possible to the questions. While participants are solicited based on their association and direct relationship to the Museum, current staff members cannot take part until they retire. Prior to the inception of the program and with the assistance of the General Counsel's office, the Museum Archives authored a Deed of Gift and a Rights and Restrictions Clause. Once signed by the interviewee, these documents transfer copyright of the final manuscript to the Museum while permitting the interviewee the freedom to restrict certain pages or an entire manuscript for a designated length of time.

As of December 1997, forty-nine interviews have been completed. Participants have included Museum Trustees and former staff, dealers, collectors, donors, artists, and others in the

contemporary art world. Interviews with Celeste G. Bartos, Leo Castelli, Mildred Constantine, Elaine Dannheisser, Grace Glueck, Richard Koch, Jasper Johns, Philip Johnson, Sol LeWitt, John Rewald, Eloise Ricciardelli, Louise Bertram Smith, Joanne Stern, and Edward M.M. Warburg are among those most regularly requested by researchers. Two interviews currently are in progress; seven are anticipated to begin in the future, including one with the Museum's former Director, Richard E. Oldenburg. As long as funding permits, other interviews will be solicited. Five invitations to participate in the Museum's program have been declined, for reasons as diverse as the subject is writing his or her autobiography, or the subject firmly believes that he or she has nothing to add!

One of the primary tasks of the Mellon Fellow/Archives Assistant is to track the process, progress, and the details associated with each oral history from its inception to its completion. An Oral History Logbook is used to record everything from the letter of solicitation to the letter of thanks, from the transcribing to the indexing. The Mellon Fellow culls information from primary resource material in the Museum Archives and generates background information on the interviewee for the oral historian. After an interview is completed on tape and a transcription is made, the transcript is reviewed by the oral historian for accuracy, and an edited version is sent to the interviewee for additional changes and for the purpose of placing any restrictions on the material. The Chief Archivist reads the manuscript at this stage, and the document is then indexed. The Mellon Fellow edits and inputs the changes to the final text, verifies that the indexing has been properly executed, manages the final stages of preparation of the manuscript, sends a copy to the interviewee, and arranges for proper storage and eventual user access.

Outreach, both within and outside the Museum, has been successful. In keeping with the Museum's objective to share information, the Museum Archives staff prepares abstracts of each completed interview and ensures their entry into Voyager, the Museum's Research Information Database, and RLIN, the national database of the Research Libraries Information Network. Certain key names and subjects from each index have been "tagged" in the catalogue records so that when searched on Voyager or on RLIN, individual interviews will be revealed as sources of information. The Mellon Fellow also adds to the oral history text Museum exhibition numbers, titles, and dates, when appropriate, which indicate to the reader that additional documentation relating to a particular subject, personality, or exhibition exists for consultation in the Museum Archives or elsewhere. The complete name and subject indices accompany each oral history enabling the information to be easily accessed.

The Museum's collection of oral histories is consulted regularly by biographers, art and social historians, professors, students, Museum staff, and others for a variety of research purposes. (There were seventy-five users in 1996.) For example, Agnes Gund, President of the Museum, recently quoted a humorous anecdote from the Sol LeWitt interview in a speech she gave at the opening of the Sol LeWitt prints exhibition in 1996. She relayed how LeWitt, working in 1963 as the night watchman of the "21 Building" of the Museum during the Cuban Missile Crisis, said to Alfred H. Barr, Jr., upon seeing that masterpieces were being removed to safety: "Excuse me, Mr. Barr, where these paintings are going I want to go, too." Additionally, museum personnel and architects involved in the Museum's current expansion project have benefited from reading the insightful comments of their predecessors in the oral histories of Walter Bareiss, Donald H. Elliott, Wilder Green, Philip Johnson, Richard Koch, Cesar Pelli, and Richard Weinstein.

Preparations currently are underway for the production of a formal Guide to the Oral History Program, which will include a synopsis of the genesis, growth, policies, procedures, and success of the Program, as well as short descriptive entries on each interview.

Final transcripts of interviews are stored at the Museum Archives as well as at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Pocantico Hills, New York, where they can be made available to researchers. Versions of the manuscript with interviewees' and interviewers' annotated notes are also stored at RAC along with the master and duplicate cassette tapes of the interview. These items cannot be made available to the public.

We hope that the Oral History Program will continue to operate as a vital and invaluable part of The Museum of Modern Art Archives, as we look forward to conducting many more interviews.

Claire Dienes
Mellon Fellow/Archives Assistant
The Museum of Modern Art Archives

A Researcher's Experience: What the Archives of the Brooklyn Museum of Art Reveals about the Growth of Art Conservation

[Editor's Note: Jean Portell has been researching at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, documenting the development of art conservation in the United States, and has offered to share some of her findings with us.]

Retouching art is an activity that began long ago, possibly even when cave dwellers painted figures with ochre and carbon pigments. But it seems that not until this century did people begin to accept art preservation as a specialized field with its own ethical and educational concerns.

For a book on the history of art conservation in the U.S.A., I am collecting the evidence of this twentieth century evolution. One discovery - the focus of this article - is that the seed for our nation's first conservation program was nurtured in Brooklyn, New York. First, let me give you some background.

The Archives of the Brooklyn Museum of Art was established in 1985. Archivist Deborah Wythe and her co-workers are preserving correspondence, memos, lecture records, photographs, and scrapbooks. Just as importantly, they are typing summaries of these into computers, making it possible for inquirers like me to locate quickly pertinent files. Since 1994, I have perused all the conservation-related documents available to me. (This Archives withholds access to memoranda and correspondence of the past 25 years.)

The records of the museum's Office of the Director make lively reading. Correspondence from the 1920s and 1930s shows that in the early decades of this century it was typical for career artists to act also as restorers. For example, a May 25, 1933, letter to Director William H. Fox from artist Wilford S. Conrow begins, "Dear Dr. Fox: After more than 20 years of preparation, I

am undertaking the cleaning and restoration of paintings as an addition to my usual work of portrait painting." The nature of his lengthy preparation is not specified, but in this solicitation letter Mr. Conrow mentions that he had recently worked on paintings belonging to the Montclair Art Museum and Princeton University. His capability, he states, "includes every branch of picture restoration, relining, and the cradling of panel paintings."

An approximately contemporaneous list summarizing the jobs done in one year at the Brooklyn Museum of Art by E. "Fritz" Schafranek gives an example of the other approach that was typical: art restoration as an aspect of general maintenance. For 3 decades, until 1933, Mr. Schafranek ran the Department of Repairing and Gilding in the basement of the museum next to the carpentry shop. The undated list of 30 items in his job summary for one year includes: "1. Regilding & repairing gold picture frames, 2. Cleaning and varnishing paintings..., 28. Also doing Preparator Work ... mending pottery, vases, plates, figurines." I suspect that the final entry was penned for its amusement value, because Item 30 reads, "And hold the record for catching the most mice and rats...." (A photocopy of this undated one-page list was given to me by both the present chief conservator and a former one.)

In December 1934, the museum hired young Harvard graduate Sheldon Keck to be its restorer, designating him "staff artist." In addition to treating the museum's paintings and sculptures during the next 30 years, Mr. Keck and his partner and wife, Caroline Keck, together with the directors they worked for at this museum, did much to advance the field of conservation.

In 1954 the museum held a major exhibition on the structure, deterioration, and preservation of art. For the "Take Care" show, Caroline Keck wrote a primer of practical information carrying the title "How to Take Care of Your Pictures." The book was published jointly by the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in an edition of 10,000 copies, and - like the exhibition - it garnered many favorable notices. Having learned from Mrs. Keck that a second edition was put out by Scribners, I wanted to check the book's production details. The Brooklyn Museum of Art Archives did not have this information, and neither did the publications department of either museum. (MOMA did note that they produced a third reprint in 1965, and that the book was out of print by 1974 when they considered doing a revision.) The company that now owns Scribners has kept no information about revised edition it produced around 1978.

While the publication records of this museum book are scant, fortunately many documents still exist to make evident the museum's early involvement with conservation education (as apart from staging didactic exhibitions and training people). The records of the Brooklyn Museum of Art's Director's Office (DIR 1957-58; Dept. of Restoration) reveal a little-known link with New York University. During academic years 1957-58, 1958-59, and 1959-60, a course titled "Fundamentals in Painting Conservation" was taught by Sheldon and Caroline Keck at the museum. So successful was it that the second and third series of Brooklyn-based classes were included in the course catalog of NYU's Institute for Fine Arts.

A trove of archival documents (DIR 1958-59; Exploratory Conference in Conservation) at the Brooklyn Museum of Art reveals that the first academic program for art conservation in this country evolved from a conference held October 23-25, 1958. Edgar Schenck, the museum's director at that time, worked closely with Mr. and Mrs. Keck to organize the "Exploratory

Conference in Painting Conservation." With some difficulty, they obtained a grant of \$4,400 from the Rockefeller Foundation to cover the costs of the conference. Sixteen specialist participants and 12 observers came together for the Exploratory Conference. At its close, a museum press release (#581027-16) broadcast this alarm: "A center for research and for training in conservation in connection with the preservation of works of art was described as one of the greatest artistic needs in this country by the three-day Exploratory Conference on Conservation held last week at the Brooklyn Museum."

Three universities, Harvard, Yale, and New York University, had sent observers to the conference. One of these institutions accepted the challenge, and in the fall of 1960 New York University's Institute of Fine Arts opened the first North American art conservation program. Sheldon Keck was one of its planners. (He left the museum in 1961 to become its director.) Again, the Rockefeller Foundation was asked for support; it responded with a five-year start-up grant to NYU of \$500,000. Thirty-seven years later, the NYU program is one of several in North America teaching art preservation.

The Archives of the Brooklyn Museum of Art has proven to be an essential resource, significantly expanding the information I received from the present chief conservator Kenneth Moser and from Mrs. Keck, the Rockefeller Archives Center, and other sources. My experience in Brooklyn convinces me that archivists in other museums may be able to help me track the milestones of art preservation.

Jean D. Portell
13 Garden Place; Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-643-1222; 718-643-8773 fax
JeanDP@AOL.com

Museum Archives Section, Working Group on Appraisal, "Beyond Just in Case"

On August 27, 1997, the day before sessions started at the 1997 SAA Annual Meeting, the Museum Archives section sponsored a working group at the Art Institute of Chicago, spending four hours discussing appraisal of the institutional records of museums. The twenty-four participants received a warm welcome, excellent refreshments, and an elegant meeting space from host Bart Ryckbosch, Institute archivist. Prior to coming to Chicago, all had received an extensive bibliography created by the Smithsonian Institution Archives, with suggested readings so that we would all be up to speed on appraisal theory.

The following report is a compilation of notes from the group's scribes, Susan Sucharski, Mary Ann Campbell, Karen DeSeve, and David Bryant; subgroup reporters, Maureen Melton, Laura Graedel, Michele Welck, and Mary Ann Campbell; and the working group leader, Deborah Wythe. Far from yielding a white paper, as we had originally hoped, the discussions raised many questions and areas for future discussion. The working group consensus, supported by the Section meeting, was that a continuation at the SAA Annual Meeting in Orlando would be worthwhile.

First the group outlined some of the general functions of museums, after which we looked at exhibition functions and records in some detail. Participants then broke into four sub-groups: development, education, marketing, and operations. Each sub-group discussed specific issues related to appraisal of records in one of the four categories.

Museum functions

General functions in a museum include but are not limited to the following: collecting; publishing; educating; product development; exhibitions; research; conservation; community outreach; public relations/marketing; governance; registration; repatriation; object acquisition and management; object utilization; outreach; archives; food services; grants/fundraising; museum shop.

The general governance includes a board of trustees; administrative personnel including operations; executive director; finance; personnel; facilities; security; information services; legal services; a collections management group including exhibitions people; conservation; registrar; exhibit installations and interpreters; and money making groups such as events, museum shop, and wholesale and licensing departments. Other activities include curatorial research, publications (scholarly and more general publications), and research and education as part of general outreach programs.

Exhibitions

For a more in-depth look at the inner workings of a museum, the general discussion moved to one specific area, exhibitions planning and installation. The first step is for a curatorial department to provide an inhouse proposal. This would involve a distribution list, lots of revisions, etc.

Several questions followed. Who is the office of origin? Who are the other active offices? If a proposal is rejected, do we keep it? This last question raised some additional issues. If a large institution is involved, keeping large volumes of records may not be desirable. If an institution does decide to keep records, the completeness of the documentation needs to be determined, as this will have an impact on appraisal. It should be noted, however, that the records will always tell something about the curatorial department, but not necessarily "tell something about the director." As part of a "documentation strategy," do we want to document all exhibits - small or large - and, if so, why?

What other kinds of records would be associated with exhibits? Development and finance records were mentioned. The development records could be duplicate records. The budget records may or may not be duplicates. It is the responsibility of the archivist to determine how revealing the material is and whether or not to keep the records. This is a historical judgment to be determined by the archivist.

Exhibitions produce many version of catalog and label text. The archivist needs to ask herself/himself, "how valuable are these drafts to administrators, especially after the seven year period of legal liability? One rule of thumb is to keep the first and last versions.

Curatorial departments create research files, check lists, loan files, object research files, etc. In evaluating these files, the group noted that loan files may document both acceptances and rejections. Objects that are actually exhibited will show up in the catalog checklist; therefore, checklists created by a curatorial department do not necessarily have to be retained. The exception is small exhibits. Smaller shows often will not have a catalogue, so checklists should be kept for small exhibitions. This assumes that the archivist believes that the draft lists have historical value.

Files found in the registrar's office include contracts, loans, insurance documents, evaluations, shipping information, etc. related to exhibitions. Photo files are also kept documenting the museum's collections and items on loan. Depending on the institution, these files could reside in the registrar's office, photo department, curatorial department, etc.

Exhibition research files would include copies of articles with or without citations. Since notes are probably only valuable to the curator: How comprehensible are the notes? How useful are they, really? Do we want to document the process or document the final result?

Installation records posed a number of concerns. For example, what do you do about labels, wall panels, etc.? Should samples be saved? Should photocopies be made? Do we keep a record, if it mimics what is contained in an exhibition catalogue or found elsewhere? (Note: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA does not retain these records.) Should blueprints, drawings, models, installation photos, paint and paper samples, etc. be retained or can they be discarded?

The only question asked about publications was "Who did it?" No further discussion ensued. The last issue that was part of the general discussion was in house training files and the only question was whether or not we need to know more about how this activity is conducted, and if records need to be retained that document that process.

Development

Important documents to seek and preserve include those that show the direction of development's attention and priorities: new initiatives, new directors or trustees, approaches to individuals or companies.

Issues discussed by the development group included the need to check with the granting agency to see what requirements there are to 'close out' the grants. It was noted that some agencies, such as NHPRC and NSF do not keep copies of all proposals.

Annual fund and membership lists may be problematic for research purposes because of confidentiality issues. Note that unique and important members and donors of the institution will probably be documented in other places than on membership lists, which may be too voluminous to be worth keeping.

Donor research may have historical value, but is likely to be too voluminous to retain. The archives may want to consider setting a dollar value below which records are discarded.

Restrictions are an important issue in development records and should be discussed with the records' creators. A restriction of 15 years or perhaps longer may be necessary.

Education

First, we discussed some of the major functions of education departments, and then discussed the types of records those functions might yield. We only had time to do the following categories:
Education: docent programs

Most of our institutions have docent training programs that are part of the education department. In all of our institutions, we thought the docent programs were underdocumented. We want to know more about the history of these programs, yet there is often not much information in the department--perhaps since most docent activity is volunteer activity, without a lot of staff involvement or paperwork. Among records retained are/would be: annual activity reports, newsletters, training packets, participant lists, and some videotaped presentations of training programs.

Education: events

Most of us have ephemera, posters, brochures, newsletters, etc., promoting public programs and events. Most of us keep one copy of each publication for reference. Most felt that while these things have limited historical value, they have strong exhibition value. People like to see old programs, and the like on display, so these printed materials are often kept, even if they are not strictly archival or original.

Education: lectures/symposiums

Most of us keep correspondence, records documenting the planning of these events, and one copy of brochures, etc. We would like to have more documentation of lectures, such as notes or videotapes, especially from important visiting artists, performers.

Education: tours, travel

Most agreed that tours given for members were mostly done to make money for the institution, not particularly to advance cause of scholarship. We keep/would keep itineraries, lists of participants, reports of unusual events for legal purposes (accidents, deaths, robberies), but dispose of most of the administrative/duplicate materials documenting the finances and logistics of the trip, which are probably kept by financial anyway.

Education: exhibition labels, catalogs, etc.

Some museums have interpretation staff who generate lots of materials such as label copy, publication copy, catalogue copy for exhibitions. We would keep whatever documents the departmental activity in regard to the creation of labels/text, etc. Some archives are saddled with

large amounts of text from publications, curatorial departments that repeat holdings of education. Disposition is necessary for duplicated materials.

Education: banners, large posters

One archivist does save one copy of all banners and posters in an offsite location. Many of us do not have the room to preserve large format materials and unfortunately cannot save these types of oversize materials.

Education: special need programs

Keep originals documenting staff functions re handicapped visitors, including correspondence, reports, Braille samples, 1 copy of printed materials for special needs visitors, accessibility program documentation.

Education: school visits

Keep records re operation of school programs, such as policies, budgets, guidelines, etc. Toss records documenting details of specific visits by school classes.

Education: visitor surveys

Keep statistical overviews, summaries. Toss actual survey forms.

Education: contests

Keep guidelines, policies, one copy of announcement, press clippings, winning submissions, etc. Toss most of entries after administrative use.

Marketing

In discussing marketing as it relates to a museum, we looked at it as a "function" not as a department. The activities associated with marketing are selling products either through the museum shop, product development, licensing, photography, promotional activities, publications, museum cafe, facilities rental, museum admissions, museum sponsored travel, etc. In other words, any activity that makes money for the museum.

What kind of records do these functions produce? The museum shop produces financial records (administrative records); policy documents (what do we sell?); licensing documents; inventories. It is important to know what the museum and the shop sells, but it is not critical to archive every item. Summary reports should be sufficient.

Product development and licensing files include proposals; product files; exhibition-related product files; administrative files; copyright/permission and licensing files; supplier files. Proposals are files related to new products for wholesale distribution and/or for museum shop

sales. Product files include designs, correspondence, contracts, photos of objects, and finished product. It also includes products that are produced and products that are rejected.

All summary reports are part of files found in product development and licensing departments. Exhibition files include summary finance information that may or may not need to be kept. Administrative files contain a history of the supplier relationship; and what sells and what does not sell. Everything sold does not necessarily need to be documented and many financial records associated with this department will show up elsewhere.

Important legal information is contained in the copyright/permission files and these files should be carefully reviewed to determine legal limitations for contracts, permissions, etc.

Museum shop files include ordering records which probably need not be retained. Policy information for the shop can be found elsewhere (e.g. minutes). Shop material has value in that it documents exhibitions. Should shop products related to exhibits be collected and preserved as part of the museum archives? Not every item needs to be saved if there is a copy in a catalogue that can be made part of the permanent record.

Administrative records related to marketing should be preserved. Financial records, policy documents (at the administrative level), planning documents, and the monthly plan all document the administrative value of the marketing function.

Museum cafe and facilities rentals include contract records and museum policy records. For both functions, museum policy records can be found at the administrative level. Facilities rental records, on the other hand, also include weekly and daily function reports, files of people at the museum (injuries, security issues, accident reports, etc.), flyers, photos, etc.

It is felt that summary reports for both departments should be kept. But ephemera, photo set-ups for events, and flyers, all part of the facilities rental function, were interesting but not critical to preserve.

Museum publications files include exhibition related (object) files; author files; rights and reproduction; subscription files; copyright files; publisher files. More specifically, the rights and reproduction files include contracts, preliminary correspondence, photo orders, and research files. These four categories of files appear to have only an administrative value. If an object index exists as part of this record series, where does it go and does it have administrative value? What about author files? How much material should be retained? How important are author files?

Since there are copyright issues surrounding publications, should contract files be maintained in order to track permissions? Who is responsible for the burden of proof? Do these files have research value once these issues have been resolved?

Electronic records pose other problems and issues surround these records create another whole group of files: electronic records policy, current status of research files and policy development

files related to electronic publishing issues, etc. It is felt that publisher files have administrative value and are considered administrative records.

The promotional part of the marketing function includes the creation of brochures, advertisements, displays for events, public relations files, press releases, radio and TV spots and other types of audio visual material, etc. The general consensus was that the critical policy material would be retained by the director's office; a copy of the brochure should be retained, and that no radio tape or TV tape should be kept.

The World Wide Web was the last topic on the agenda and this issue was left for another meeting.

Operations

We began by determining what functions might be included under 'operations.' We came up with security, maintenance/building operations, computer services, construction/design, grounds, admissions, remote storage/remote locations, cabinet shop, electrical, plumbing, safety/emergency response, and environmental monitoring. Of these, we agreed that the common ground for the greatest number of museums would consist only of: security, maintenance/building operations, construction/design, grounds, safety/emergency response, and environmental monitoring. We then tried to think of the record series that we would definitely want to preserve for each subsection of operations. We know these aren't comprehensive lists and that each museum's peculiarities of administrative structure and functions will require local alterations. (Also, like all the other groups, we could have kept talking about this for at least another hour.)

Operations: security

We agreed that we would like to collect and preserve: policies and procedures; annual and/or summary reports; admission statistics; theft and damage reports (and records documenting follow-up and consequences); incident reports (and records documenting follow-up and consequences) [We were not sure that we really needed to retain every report of graffiti in the restrooms, so might suggest saving only the records of the more major incidents if there is staff time available for selective retention]; staff lists; blueprints and/or diagrams (though we thought it unlikely Security would relinquish control of these).

Questions we had relating to security records revolved around being selective, as mentioned about, and what to do if your museum contracts out for security services.

Operations: maintenance

We agreed that we would like to collect and preserve: policies and procedures; annual and/or summary reports; photos documenting facility and grounds; condition reports of facilities; incident reports (be selective and keep significant ones only?); plans and/or blueprints (be selective and keep only those which document changes in the appearance and character of the facilities? Or keep all, even if documenting minor changes like moving an outlet?).

Operations: construction & design

Keep policies and procedures; annual and/or summary reports; photos documenting construction (before, during, after); specifications; proposals/descriptions/rationales; budgets; plans and drawings (early conceptions through as built) [We were not sure all plans needed to be kept and considered things like whether or not the facility was a historic structure and whether we should be selective and keep only the more major changes to appearance and character.]; project files (similar questions about whether we should be selective).

Operations: safety & emergency response

Policies and procedures; annual and/or summary reports; response plans; incident reports (and related consequences) (be selective?).

Operations: environmental monitoring

Policies and procedures; annual and/or summary reports; incident reports (and related consequences) (be selective?).

Working group participants: Michele Aldrich (Cornell University); Alan Bain (Smithsonian Institution); David Bryant (Museum of Science & Industry); Mary Ann Campbell (Peabody Essex Museum); Liz Clancy (Denver Museum of Natural History); Polly Darnell (Shelburne Museum); Sarah Demb (Peabody Museum); Jonathan Dembo (Cincinnati Museum); Karen DeSeve (Cheney Cowles Museum); Michelle Elligott (Museum of Modern Art); Laura Graedel (Museum of Science & Industry); Colleen Hennessey (Freer & Sackler Gallery); Susan Koutsky (National Museum of Women in the Arts); Alan Leviton (California Academy of Sciences); Andrew Matrinez (Rhode Island School of Design); Maureen Melton (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); Ann Marie Przybyla (Cleveland Museum); Bart Ryckbosch (Art Institute of Chicago); Paula Stewart (Amon Carter Museum); Lorraine Stuart (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston); Susan Sucharski (Northwest Memorial Hospital); Paul Theerman (Smithsonian Institution); Michele Welck (California Academy of Science); and Deborah Wythe (Brooklyn Museum of Art).