

ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES MUSEUM ARCHIVES SECTION

SAA Annual Conference
August 31, 2000, 8am-10am
Adams Mark Hotel, Denver, CO

After introductions and a review of the agenda, Sarah Demb, incoming Chair of the Section, began the meeting.

Museum Archives Directory

Ann Marie Przybyla reported on the status of the directory of museum archives, explaining that Judy Turner of the Milwaukee Public Museum felt that her institution could no longer host the directory on its web page. After section members agreed that work on the directory should continue, Alan Bain volunteered to take on the project and mount it on the Smithsonian website, with a link to the SAA web page. He inquired about the current status of the directory and asked that all work to date be sent to him in an electronic version, if possible.

Museum Archives Guidelines

Polly Darnell reported that she had earlier attended a meeting of SAA's Standards Committee, which reviewed the current draft of the guidelines for museum archives. Among other suggestions, the Committee had recommended that the guidelines be submitted to affiliate groups for comments.

A spirited discussion followed, during which Polly asked Kris Kiesling of the Standards Committee, who was present at the section meeting, whether we were on the right track. Kris responded "yes," but the guidelines needed more specificity to "give it teeth." Alan Bain stated that the draft should first and foremost be presented to the American Association of Museums (AAM), which should be encouraged to consider adherence to the finished guidelines a prerequisite for accreditation amongst its member institutions. After further discussion, it was agreed that several section members would be responsible for presenting the draft to a minimum of eight museum and historical organizations.

Maureen Melton asked whether it was necessary to circulate the draft again to section members for review. Polly responded by asking section members whether they would allow the guidelines committee to make the revisions and send the finalized draft directly to the Standards Committee. The Guidelines Committee consists of Deborah Wythe, Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Paula Stewart, Polly Darnell, Sammie Morris, Andy Martinez, and Sarah Demb. With general consent from the section, Polly agreed that the committee would have the final version complete in time for publication in the February newsletter.

Polly announced that Andy Martinez would be assuming primary responsibility for the project, and that further comments could be directed to him at amartine@risd.edu.

Polly then asked whether the final product would be published by SAA. Kris Kiesling responded that SAA would probably automatically produce the guidelines either

electronically or in *Archival Outlook*, as it had the standards for college and university archives. Kathleen Williams observed that it was therefore important to receive SAA's (*Continued on next page*) endorsement. If the section wanted to produce a glossy brochure for distribution, however, it would have to apply to Council for funding. In response to a question concerning the section's level of control over the brochure's design, Kris Kiesling noted that we would be required to work on the design in conjunction with the Council liaison, as well as with Teresa Brinati in Publications.

SAA Standards Committee Liaison

Kris Kiesling asked if she could "make a pitch" on behalf of the Standards Committee. She explained that SAA was interested in achieving broad-based participation in response to issues proposed by such standards-setting organizations as NISO and ISO. To achieve that goal, members of the SAA Standards Committee were asking sections and other SAA groups to designate a liaison to the committee who would periodically be asked to review and comment on standards drafts. Anyone interested in the responsibility should submit his or her name to Sarah Demb, who would then notify the Standards Committee. Bernadette Callery from the Carnegie Museum of Natural History subsequently volunteered to serve as the section's liaison.

Museum Archives Publication

Ann Marie Przybyla reported on the status of the upcoming publication on museum archives, noting that, after some unexpected delays, she had signed a contract with SAA to be general editor of a work that would be comprised of contributions from herself and other museum archivists. She further related that a working group had convened the previous day to discuss appropriate material to include in the publication's sidebars. At a meeting following the working group, attendees had volunteered to assume responsibility for writing almost all of the proposed chapters. Contributors to the manual now include Susie Anderson, Sally Brazil, Polly Darnell, Sarah Demb, Fynnette Eaton, Marisa Keller, Susan Koutsky, Paula Stewart, Kathleen Williams, and Deborah Wythe. [Additionally, after the section meeting, Fred Calabretta agreed to write the chapter on oral history]. According to an agreement they were expected to sign with SAA, all contributors will receive a small honorarium and complimentary copies of the book upon publication.

Museum Archives Newsletter

Paula Stewart announced that she would be relinquishing her position as editor of the museum archives newsletter because of pressing responsibilities resulting from construction at her institution, the Amon Carter Museum. Paula thanked Bart Ryckbosch for his role in copying and distributing the newsletter and introduced Sammie Morris as the new editor. All contributions to the newsletter can be forwarded to Sammie Morris at:

Smorris@dm-art.org.

SAA Conference Program 2001

Polly Darnell announced that the theme of next year's SAA Conference was "Globalization." This led to a general discussion on possible topics for a session proposal,

or proposals from the section. Polly noted that the NEDCC was involved in an international consulting exchange program with Cuba and former Eastern Bloc countries. Maygene Daniels proposed that a session could focus on examples of museum archives in other countries. Michelle Elligott responded that MOMA had contact with museums in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, none of which had what we would call archives but exhibited an interest in records and how to find them. Alan Bain noted that, although interesting, it would be difficult to develop a session from these observations.

Maygene then noted that interest in Holocaust-related records was bringing an awareness of the importance of museum archives and international cooperation to the forefront. Susie Anderson asked whether it would be relevant to have a session featuring scholars who were researching records relating to repatriation. Several section members questioned the current status of research into Nazi-looted art, and Deborah Wythe noted that inquiries in that area were generally winding down.

Other ideas for sessions not focusing on globalization were then discussed, including access to provenance information and cooperative access programs. Deborah Wythe observed that one of the more problematic issues confronting museum archives was the management of non-institutional records created for one purpose but having secondary historical significance. She cited the papers of architects and architectural historians as an example and also noted that museum archives were frequently custodians of collectors' records. Bart Ryckbosch added that the Art Institute of Chicago had several collections from art appraisers. Deborah Wythe agreed to follow up on this idea as a potential session.*

Maygene Daniels asked whether the 2001 conference, to be held in Washington, D.C., would be an appropriate opportunity to acknowledge the history of the museum archives movement, initially sponsored and supported by the Smithsonian Institution. Maureen Melton responded that perhaps an event, rather than a session, could be planned. A tour of the Smithsonian Institution Archives, essentially the "mother ship" for museum archivists, was mentioned as one possibility.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Ann Marie Przybyla
New York State Archives