

# Museum Archives Section

Business Meeting

Thursday August 12, 2010

1:45 PM - 3:45 PM

## **Greeting/Introduction**

Leilani Dawson, Francine Snyder, and Susie Anderson are co-chairing meeting. Sign-up sheet is circulating the room along with agenda.

## **2011 Programming Committee Announcement**

Francine Snyder asks for proposals for Archives 360 degrees, emphasizing proposals addressing the past, present and future. This theme is meant to be all-inclusive, 60-90 minutes long. Please write a 150-word abstract for consideration, a 75-word abstract will be published in the catalogue. The deadline is Oct. 1 2010.

Snyder is also looking for workshop proposals and volunteers for the 2012 programming committee.

## **Council Liaison Report**

Deborah Richardson, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, American History Archives Center, Council Liaison: Greetings and updates from council. We have a business meeting Saturday, 12:45 - 1:45 pm. Voting on dues increase (graduated increase over the next three years); constitutional amendments dealing with the primary contact of an institution and the 90-day grace period for submitting dues after membership has lapsed (proposed change to 30-day grace period). Grace period change is in response to electronic mail being faster than snail mail.

Strategic activities and goals within Society: advocacy, technology, diversity. The council has issued a diversity statement for working with diversity issue. The society itself is geographically diverse and diverse across types of archives, but social and economic diversity issues still need to be addressed. Richardson references Elizabeth Adkin's speech as outgoing president in which she encourages SAA to turn its attention toward diversity.

Council has issued best practices for working with researchers and professionals with physical disabilities. These best practices will be available through the SAA website.

The Society has been granting a number of special awards throughout the year, and is creating a Foundation Board, which will be the umbrella agency (501-c3) for all special awards. The Foundation Board is currently seeking contributions for 2011 meeting, "75 dollars for 75 years." What do we want to look like 75 years from now? What will be our contribution? Our legacy?

If members have questions/concerns/suggestions for Council, seek out Deborah (richardsond@si.edu) or address your questions to the MAS co-chairs.

## **Ballots Results**

### **Steering Committee Introductions**

The ballot results are in and the Museum Archives Section now has a full steering committee!

Chair elect: Leanda Gahegan, Reference Archivist at National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Recording secretary: Megan Finn, Project Archivist at the Philadelphia Museum of Art

Newsletter editor: Adrianna Del Collo, Associate Archivist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Web Liaison: Matt Herbison, Archivist at the Independent Seaport Museum

Leanda, Megan, and Matt introduce themselves. Susie reads Adrianna's greetings as she could not be present for this year's conference.

### **Vote on bylaw changes**

Last year Council revised guidelines for section governance, and MAS needs to change bylaws to support compliance with new guidelines. Changes are made to support co-chairs (more than one chair), a mandate for electronic voting and annual elections for steering committee officers.

Bylaws are unanimously accepted.

## **Survey Results**

This year, Leilani Dawson circulated a survey to all MAS members through the listserv, and she reports on the following notable responses and requests:

Conference sessions: more collaboration; more sessions on collaboration among archivists and between archivists/non-archivists within an institutions with particular focus on collaborating with IT departments; more discussions about emerging technology; continued focus on museum records management.

Business meeting: more structure and focus; more brainstorming and planning time built into meetings with focus on working groups and panel sessions that discuss topical issues; more efforts to "prime the pump" for session ideas prior to business meetings; regular updates between meetings.

Working groups/session priorities: creating a resource/platform/forum for sharing resources with other members of MAS, hosting workshops on Museum Archives issues, offering outreach to people who cannot attend the annual SAA conference and people who have archival responsibilities but are not formally trained archivists.

Newsletters: provide repository features, session features, and news about the section as well as members of the section; include fewer business meeting summaries and minutes.

## **Working Group Introduction**

One of the respondents to the survey wrote: "I didn't know we had a working group!" The idea behind reinstating the Working Group stemmed from discussions last year, survey results, and similar input from MAS members.

The basic premise of the group is to plan for resources that expand upon the MAS Manual. The Working Group will address how we can take what's in the manual and make a practical working guide for building upon it, and how we can address the needs of everyone in this room as well as members of MAS who cannot attend meetings.

The Working Group meeting will be held in Park Tower 8224 directly after business meeting.

## Newsletter Update

Adrianna has created a dedicated email account for submitting discussing MAS news and submitting content to the newsletter: [museumarchivesnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:museumarchivesnewsletter@gmail.com)

Please submit content! We have hundreds of members of MAS, and not everyone is able to attend SAA. The newsletter is a forum for announcements, updates, new projects, new resources, images, and ideas.

(The agenda reserved time for discussing "Requests for Session Papers" and a "New 'Postscript' Feature" during the Newsletter Update, but the Five-Minute Repository Updates began immediately.)

## Ten Five Minute Repository Updates

*Archives Blogs.* Karen Stevens, Archivist/Manager of the Library, National Park Service, Independence National Historical Park.

- Stevens reports on our federal tax dollars at work, lamenting that the cultural parks are lost in the grandeur of the wilderness parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite. <Slide: screenshot of library/archives web page> The web page has links to blogs that the archives has created to increase public awareness and promote accessibility to two specific collections.
- Blog 1: The Morris Family Papers (Old Philadelphia Family that donated a historic house to the National Park Service along with family papers dating from 1732 to 1973). Contributors: Margaret Welch, an archivist with the National Park Service who is processing the Morris Family materials, is finding a variety of documents and illustrations, and Dana Kellogg Repash, an intern and research assistant on the project at the Independence National Historical Park Archives, is assisting Margaret with research. Morris house was the home of George Washington during yellow fever epidemic of 1793-1794, and is often called "the Germantown White House." The blog is accessible at <http://morrisfamilypapers.wordpress.com/>.
- Blog 2: Archaeology field records from fifty years of excavations within the boundaries of Independence Park in Philadelphia, PA. Block 3 of Independence Mall produced over a million artifacts, which is the most significant urban archaeological dig in the United States. Blogger, Patrice Jeppson, is promoting public archaeology education and is devoting extra time to coming into the archives and examining associated field records in order to write about the history of archaeology at Independence Park. She hopes a publication will evolve from this project. The blog is accessible at <http://digginginthearchives.blogspot.com/>.
- Two examples of interesting outcomes: A researcher saw the blog on the Morris Family Papers and is interested in the recipes accumulated by the Morris Family Women. Another researcher has been able to identify some of the African-American laborers who worked on excavations, and tracked down J.W. "Smokey" Moore, an archaeologist who worked on the project and is now 93 years old.

*First International Seminar on Museum Archives and Research, São Paulo.* Deborah Wythe, Head of Digital Collections and Services, Brooklyn Museum / Museum of Contemporary Art, University of São Paulo.

- Section report on the First International Seminar on Museum Archives and Research. Challenges in São Paulo include: project-based funding; state-funded museums that must adhere to governmentally prescribed collections and series; regional competition among archivists (the environment is not amenable to collaboration); very restrictive copyright laws and legislation.
- Wythe's theme at the seminar, Archives of the 21st Century, addressed web-based projects and advances in technology as applied to special collections.
- Most speakers were discussing the research they had done in museum archives, only two speakers were actually practicing archivists. Attendance was limited to 100 seats, and there was a waiting list beyond that.
- Next year's session: Art Library Collaborations
- No materials from this seminar have appeared on the web yet, but seminar proceedings will be published in the near future.
- Contact Wythe if you'd like to talk about reading a paper with simultaneous translation.

*Collaborating to Produce Web Content on Museum History.* Jim Moske, Managing Archivist, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives

- The Met is currently undergoing a monumental transition of leadership. Former director, Philippe de Montebello, has retired, and Tom Campbell, the new director, is placing emphasis on emerging technologies, and a new Digital Media Department has been created.
- The new department began by re-launching and revamping museum website.
- The Archives is using the re-launch to leverage collections and use information about the history of the museum more effectively.
- The Archives compiled and distributed a list of all special exhibitions from 1870-present, and created an access database for compiling and distributed a PDF report that was drawn from this database. The initial release was greeted warmly by staff and outside researchers.
- Next steps involve collaborating with Digital Media staff to migrate access database to a web portal that Digital Media will staff and maintain.
- This project was largely accomplished with intern staffing.
- A new museum blog called "Now at the Met" (<http://www.metmuseum.org/now-at-the-met.aspx>) has also been launched. The Archives submits a monthly article called "Today in Met History" that presents notable pieces of institutional history to the public.

*CMHR: A Dream Becomes a Reality.* Heather Pitcher, Archivist, The Canadian Museum for Human Rights

- This is Pitcher's first SAA meeting, and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a brand new museum with a mandate to explore the subject of human rights within Canada and beyond. Construction is still under way, and the building is slated for completion in 2012. The Museum is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, which is Treaty One territory.
- Exhibitions will be interactive and technology driven.
- Records of public engagement sessions throughout the country will form the foundation of the Archives and constitute the beginning of an oral history program.
- The bulk of collections will be digital with a traditional archival collection as well.

*P.S. 1 Archives / 1969 Exhibition.* Michelle Elligott, Museum Archivist, The Museum of Modern Art

- Elligott provides a brief update of MoMA activities over the past year and highlights upcoming projects.
- Jonathan Lill is currently processing the records of PS1, an art center that merged with MoMA about ten years ago. At approximately 460 record center cartons, he collection is larger than had been anticipated.
- The Archives launched a mini oral history initiative, which will continue in the future.
- The Archives also completed the Paul Rosenberg archives processing project (130 linear ft.), and a finding aid will be available on the website shortly.
- This fall the Archives will begin processing the Edward Daikon (sp?) archives.
- The Archives is currently seeking an archivist for a one-year processing project during which the archivist will work with the newly acquired Silverman Fluxus collection.
- For the first time, the MoMA included the Archives department as a full collaborator for its 1969 Exhibition with Elligott working as joint-curator. The Archives is looking forward to future collaborations starting with an exhibition on abstract expressionism.
- All museum press releases are now digitized and available publicly online, which has proven to be worth all the time and effort.
- Michelle Harvey was promoted to Archivist.

*MFA, Boston Facebook Page.* Maureen Melton, Susan Morse Hilles Director of Libraries and Archives and Museum Historian, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

- Maureen Melton was unable to attend so Susie Anderson provided her information.
- The Archives is now posting a weekly photo and fun fact about the MFA to the Museum's fan page on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/mfaboston>).
- The museum is also working with a Google-owned company to set up scavenger hunts that are offered as a game/phone application and take place within the Museum.

*Reel to Reel Collection: Historic Audio Online.* Francine Snyder, Manager of Library and Archives, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Library and Archives

- Snyder presents an update on a two-year grant to process the first fifty years of the Guggenheim's history and its Reel to Reel Collection of audio recordings (<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/interact/listen/the-reel-to-reel-collection>).
- For the Reel to Reel Collection, the digitization component was outsourced, and about 600 Reel to Reels have now been digitized. A live link is now available in the container list in the finding aid. Click it, and an audio player opens.
- <Slide: screenshots of test site, which will go live over the next month or so>
- Snyder extends special thanks to Martha Horn who did coding for the project and requests that members of MAS send her their feedback once the site goes live.

*Phase II – Archives Museum Storage Improvement Project, An NEH and Hoblitzelle Foundation grant funded project.* Hillary Bober C.A., Digital Archivist, Dallas Museum of Art Archives

- Hillary Bober is a lone arranger and has been at Dallas for one year. She is the first professional archivist on staff in about six years.
- The digital archives was made possible by two endowment funding donors.
- Through the museum storage improvement project, Bobel increased storage space by approximately 175% <slides of before and after photographs from the increase in storage space>.

- Jenny Stone is converting audio and video assets to digital format as phase II of the same grant. This media is primarily used for internal educational materials and multimedia content, but a selection is also available at <http://dallasmuseumofart.tv/>.
- Stone is finalizing transcripts and entering information into the museum's CMS.
- The Archives also just received an NEA grant to digitize catalogues.

*Historic New England's Collections Access Project.* David Dwiggins, Systems Librarian/Archivist, Historic New England (Based out of Boston)

- Dwiggins reports on Historic New England's collections access project. Previously, the only collection online was a historic wallpaper collection. Content was moved from an MS-DOS database system/Access to a new Collections Management System, and Historic New England launched a new website on May 27, 2010.
- Now Library, Archives, and Museum collections are all searchable through a single user interface: <http://www.historicnewengland.org/collections-archives-exhibitions/collections-access>
- ResourceSpace open source digital assets management at Historic New England is a PHP/MySQL-based system, and new photography is stored in the digital assets management system and linked to CMS. Over 100,000 individual images have been uploaded to date.

*Electronic Records Archive Planning Grant National Historical Publications and Records Commission.* Lorraine A. Stuart, Archives Director, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

- MFA, Houston received a two-year NHPRC grant to plan for an electronic record archive that deals with institutional born-digital content.
- Stuart is reviewing submission ingestion packages for electronic accessioning and appraisal -- currently, 60,000 terabytes of information sitting loose on servers -- and looking at ways to automate the appraisal process through rule-writing and cluster analysis.
- Exploring automated appraisal process; Ingestion: migration, emulation, or combination; Repository: database type; Preservation: automated checks and balances
- Given the financial strain, the museum may be looking to develop a collaborative consortium in order to defray costs.

A PDF of these presentations will be posted on MAS website for follow-up and to provide members with speakers' contact information.

Questions:

Q: Did Francine Snyder clear rights to make Reel to Reel Collection available online?

A: The majority of files were staff lectures for which the Guggenheim already owns the copyright. Curatorial departments are currently trying to contact artists for permissions regarding those clips. Total memory of all audio files = 1 terabyte.

Q: Are the blogs that Karen Stevens described officially endorsed by the national park service or are they unofficial? Is there a vetting process?

A: The information is vetted through the archivist and hosted through Wordpress and Blogspot rather than being hosted on the official National Parks Services site.

## 2011 Session Suggestions

Anderson thanks speakers for coming forward and sharing their repository updates.

If any members have ever given a paper in conjunction with an SAA session, please consider submitting a written copy of the paper to the MAS newsletter in order to share with other section members who were not in attendance – it's a great line on the resume!

### Session proposals:

Gerri Schaad suggests: Audio on the Web -- Soup to Nuts: developing a content management system, identifying a prospective audience, delivering content to the public.

- Who is working with audio media? Who has a handle on audio media?
- There is a safe sound archive exhibitor who works out of Philadelphia named George Blood.
- Could this be a collaborative project with the Recorded Sound Roundtable?
- Could this be a collaborative project with Oral History Section?
- Content versus format: Address technological concerns along with the content being captured.
- Also address questions about licensing audio content and copyright. Obtaining permissions for the distribution of sound recordings is particularly difficult, and the laws consist of an ambiguous mix between state and federal legislation.
- In short: "Audio Recordings: Technical Issues, Content, and Copyright."

One member suggests a records management workshop or a records management focus in the working group. A session on records management in museum archives was already presented during the 2009 SAA conference.

Marketing Archives to Museum Colleagues: Education, Outreach, and Advocacy.

- Matt Herbisson says: "this is much easier to do in a very small institution".
- Archivist near Simmons uses graduate interns to organize archives exhibitions and open houses for staff to introduce other staff members to the Archives as a department and service. 120 people out of 200 attended the staff open house. Staff demanded an encore!
- How does the archives make itself viable within a larger institution? Marketing to introduce people to your archives.
- Look at successful interdepartmental collaborations within an institution.
- Who here has had a successful collaboration? Barbara Maffey (sp?) is collaborating with the Museum Conservator on risk assessment. If a museum is going to do a risk assessment, they have to identify the materials.
- What about having speakers from various stages of a collaborative effort?
- What about collaborating with retail department in lean times to market the archives?

A Session on Internships: Managing internship programs and reflecting up intern experiences.

- A second archivist expresses interest on bringing in an intern's voice for a session. How does an internship fit within a larger program of study for students, and how do internships relate to the "mid-career" shift of many professionals coming to archives as a second career.
- Deb Wythe suggests a flash presentation on internships similar to those at the Museum Computer Network conferences.

- Susie Anderson refers to the Museum Records Management session, which was organized as a panel discussion (5 panelists) with a discussion portion afterward. This might be a viable format.
- Another archivist: NHPRC/Mellon fellowship in Archival Management. Could a fellowship be revived for “mid-career” professionals?
  - Kathleen Williams answers: No, there is no plan. There is, however, a program more loosely related to professional development for archivists. The commission is currently more focused on supporting leadership in the archives profession rather than supporting individual fellowships.

Attendees who were interested in getting involved brought their cards and contact information to the Co-chairs. If members who were unable to attend are interested in being involved in a session for 2011, please contact Francine Snyder or Susie Anderson.