Library Instruction for Museum Docents

Friday, March 28th, 2014

11am Pacific - 12pm Mountain - 1pm Central - 2pm Eastern

Guests:

Linda Seckelson, Senior Reader Services Librarian, Metropolitan Museum of Art Melanie Emerson, Head of Reader Services, Art Institute of Chicago Lou Adrean, Head, Research and Public Programs, Cleveland Museum of Art Alba Fernández-Keys, Head of Libraries & Archives, Indianapolis Museum of Art

Alice Whiteside: Hi! Apologies for the connectivity issues

Meg: Have they been resolved?
Alba Fernandez-Keys: Hi!
Melanie Emerson: Hi!

Meg: Hi Alba!

Alice Whiteside: I believe so - many apologies

Emilee Mathews: Hi all

Louis Adrean: Hello everyone!

Meg: No worries Alice! Thanks so much for hosting!

Meg: We'll get started in a few minutes

Alice Whiteside: Meg, are you seeing an error/warning message? If so, I will relocate which will solve the connectivity problem for sure, but I think my wired connection is working

Meg: Alice, I don't see an error message. Does anyone else?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: I don't. **Melanie Emerson:** I don't either **Alice Whiteside:** Great! Thanks:)

Alice Whiteside: We have 14 people in the room so far

Louis Adrean: Nor do I.

Meg: I see it is 2 p.m. Shall we get started? Melanie Emerson: Sure, is Linda here? Linda: Hi, I'm here (Linda)! - Happy Friday!

Meg: Wonderful, Linda!

Meg: Let's start. Welcome to today's lunchtime chat. It's great to see everyone here!

Meg: I'm ARLIS/NA PDC Education Subcommittee member Meg Black; fellow committee members Alice Whiteside, Emilee Mathews and I are your hosts.

Meg: We are so pleased to be joined by guests Linda Seckelson, Melanie Emerson, Lou Adrean, and Alba Fernández-Keyes who will lead a discussion on library instruction for museum docents.

Meg: We're going to get started with overviews of the training programs offered by each

of the guests at their respective museums..

Meg: Who would like to go first? **Alba Fernandez-Keys:** Happy to.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: I will just share a few short posts describing our docent program and their changing use of our library. I hope this is not too long!

Meg: Sounds great!

Alba Fernandez-Keys: The docent program in the Indianapolis Museum of Art has just over 100 active docents--with a new docent class starting this November. The docent office maintains a library of basic reference materials and has a volunteer librarian. For many years IMA librarians provided ongoing training sessions on a variety of topics and docents could sign up to attend. These days I just focus on reaching out to the incoming classes with the goal of familiarizing individuals (who may have no prior Art History/Humanities training) with research materials, databases and the library in general. Once docent trainees are aware that we are here to help, I feel they will be back when they need us

Alba Fernandez-Keys: This rethinking of docent library training stems from recent patterns of use, library staffing, and philosophical changes within the docent program. Even though visits increase noticeably when we have a new docent class (trainees need to write papers!), casual use of the library has decreased in recent years and I think it is due to several reasons I will list below.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: 1. Our docents are quite tech savvy and, as most researchers do, prefer to work from home. The docent office program provides a body of object-based materials created by and for docents which resides in a document management system accessible from home.

Linda: The Met has about 1400 volunteers in all, 400 of whom are docents, 90 work in Visitor Services and the rest work in various departments (throughtout the Museum). Our library instruction team devoted to volunteers seeks to provide research training and library orientations to the docents and the visitor services volunteers, though all volunteers are invited to attend our classes. We are always looking for new ways of engaging this group which we now do through classes, one-on-one consultations, etc.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: 2. As many of you are aware, our museum underwent major staffing changes and I am now a solo librarian. The library is now only open to the public by appointment and, even though docents have badge access, due to meetings, sick days, etc., I have a posted schedule of "library hours" which changes weekly.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: 3. The docent program has steered away from overwhelming the visitor with 'facts' and there is an emphasis on teaching methods that promote visitor interaction (VTS, paraphrasing, how to look, etc).

Alba Fernandez-Keys: That's all from me, for now.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Sorry, we can't hear the audio portion. Any special instructions? Thanks.

Meg: HI Marilyn! There isn't an audio component--just text

Louis Adrean: The docent program at CMA has more than 80 active docents. We will he anew docent class in the fall. Ourl librryinstruction program focuses on on-going training for new docents as well as training for new docents. We focus on resources for interpreting the permanent collection and special exhibitions.

Melanie Emerson: AIC has about 15 active docents who each go through an initial set of library instructions, we teach the docents how to find and understand citations included in the publication history in the collections online, find works cited through the library catalog or electronic resources, and how to search the databases to find additional information or help when no bibliographic is available for an object.

Melanie Emerson: Sorry, that is a typo...we have 150 active docents

Sam Duncan: Does anyone have a program where docent attendance in a library orientation/training session is compulsory?

Maggie: We do. I am at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. All new docent classes have a mandatory library orientation.

Melanie Emerson: An orientation is not necessary, but the library instruction as part of the yearlong docent training is mandatory at AIC.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: No. Our docent program changes so often that I have to be very active in sending reminders.

Meg: Maggie, what kinds of library instruction do you provide?

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we have 100 docents, 60 museum guides, use VTS actively as one teaching strategy, with secheduled library orientations for both groups.

Louis Adrean: As part of our library instruction programs, we include internal databases such as the index to CMA publications, the museum's collections database, other databases, especially JSTOR and Oxford Art Online, , and the library catalog.

Maggie: It's about an hour long, and I give them a general overview of our various resources, as well as an in-depth tour.

Linda: Yes, Sam - we have finally gotten the managers of the docent training program to mandate library orientation and we would very much like to mandate refreshers for those already trained. There are always new features and and new searching capabilities available through the tools on the Museum's website -

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Ours is similar to what Louis described.

Maggie: I show them those same things, Louis!

Louis Adrean: At CMA new docents must atend a lib rary orientation session.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Nelson-Atkins library teaches library databases, case study method for galleries & art works.

Melanie Emerson: We would also like to have mandatory refreshers, but at this point it is still optional.

Maggie: I have been wondering if I should provide shorter, more specific training sessions: just JSTOR, or how to find an article based on a citation.

Louis Adrean: We do mandatory refresher sessions each summer.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Melanie, how do you stucture the refresher sessions?

Maggie: that is a good idea, Louis. What museum do you work in?

Linda: Right - the internal databases as well as our catalog, Oxford, Art Source and we do some "specialized" classes for docents from specific departments.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: The problem I am currently finding is that refreshers take too much of my time. It is a staffing issue. Is anyone in the same situation?

Louis Adrean: Cleveland Musuem of Art

Melanie Emerson: The refreshers tend to go over the basics, then new resources and tricks, then open to questions.

Maggie: Alba, perhaps you could start slow, with just one refresher. Repeat until just about everyone has taken it. Then make another one.

Melanie Emerson: Each refresher session is about 12-15 docents and their skill levels can vary.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, the library would love to do focused refresher group sessions, but also do individual/small informal group targetted sessions.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we found the key to buy in is a task or assisgned project from Docent training.

Louis Adrean: At CMA our refresher sessions are limited to 10 participants per class and we repeat the sessions about 10-12 times each summer.

Melanie Emerson: Yes, we provide an assignment for the new docents and also a mini assignment with the refresher sessions.

Maggie: that doesn't surprise me, Marilyn/Helen.

Maggie: I love the idea of doing smaller groups!

Alba Fernandez-Keys: I've been experimenting with training a docent/library volunteer to teach other docents--mainly database use. At the moment it is really not possible for me schedule too much time for instruction.

Louis Adrean: I don't provide an assignment, but use a sample research methodology for a CMA object.

Meg: Alba, how is that working out?

Sam Duncan: Do any of you maintain a docent research shelf as we do? It might contain pertinent research material such a bio files, etc., that relate to current exhibitions, in addition to general research material on the permanent collection?

Maggie: we have tons of docent manuals -- one for each gallery.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we use a sample research methodology with docents and university students as our primary method.

Emilee Mathews: Just to clarify--I work at a university, not a museum. But recently in a reference department meeting we compiled some "stumpers"--questions that really threw us for a loop individually, and tried to solve them collectively. I wonder if that is something that would lend itself to a docent audience?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Maggie-Still experimenting. It might be a solution for the time being. I don't think it can replace an initial full library use instruction.

Maggie: I need to determine what kind of research problems our docents are encountering, then I can create workshops that respond to those needs.

Melanie Emerson: Sam, We don't have a shelf for the docents, but in Museum Ed they have a entire docent room with this sort of material.

Joyce: I set up an exhibition reserves cart - with research material for current and upcoming exhibitions, including artist files

Louis Adrean: We do have docent shelves in the library. They essentially work as course reserve materials and I usually pull together materials for docents to consult during special exhibitions.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At Nelson, we maintain and add to a Reserve shelf for Education Dviision, which handles all docent training, as need arises/

Maggie: Joyce, that is a great idea!

Rick Sieber: At the Philadelphia Museum of Art, we have a small, self-serve docent library with books and other resources such as Sam inquired about. We staff it for a couple of hours a week, during which time the Docents can received one-on-one instruction without having to visit the main library (in a different building).

Melanie Emerson: We also have always have a curator recommends shelf for special exhibitions in the library. This is not specific to docents, but they frequently use the materials.

Joyce: Thanks Maggie - it's good for curatorial interns too we've found!

Linda: Lou, Marilyn - when you say "research methodology" for an object, do you mean a demo of how to find info using internal and external databases and research tools on a museum object?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: We have docent shelves too but I don't see them get used too much, to be completely honest.

Maggie: Melanie, that is a good idea, too!

Melanie Emerson: Thanks, Maggie!

Maggie: our docent manuals are probably the most used items in our library.

Louis Adrean: In answer to Linda's question -- yes, that what I do.

Maggie: college students and museum visitors use them, too

Linda: At the Met, the Volunteer Library collection was dismantled a long time ago (though they still have a small random collection of bits and pieces near their h

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Linda, Yes, how to research an object or theme demonstrating multiple resources using PPT, then using library materials onsite.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Linda-did your library absorb these materials?

Louis Adrean: At CMA the docents have a study room where an additional set of CMA publications is shelved.

Maggie: We have a staff member in our education dept who is in charge of training the

docents, so I am trying to be wary of stepping on her toes. Anyone else have this set-up? **Maggie:** I'm not implying she doesn't do a great job, btw! But we have a few "regulars" who use the library. The vast majority of our 150 docents never come in.....

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: AT the Nelson library, we seconded a librarian to participate in the latest round of docent training using VTS.

Linda: ooops near their headquarters office. We have a publicly accessible library, Nolen, with open shelves for browsing, which has long been a favorite hangout for the docents because everything is on open shelves and there was a history of the librarians catering to the docents. Nolen is very much there, and is used by the docents, many of whom are afraid of Watson, but we've cut down on the "catering" and are trying to teach them instead to be more independent. So we'll show them HOW to find it rather than handing them the book...

Joyce: We have a similar set-up with an education staff members in charge of docents which works out well; but we don't get a lot of docent traffic. One problem being the 2 museum locations

Meg: How many offer docents remote access to electronic resources?

Maggie: I think a lot of docents would prefer to research from home, but so few of our resources are available "off-campus".

Alba Fernandez-Keys: We don't offer remote access at all.

Melanie Emerson: We do. The docents have a shared user ID and password to access our databases remotely.

Maggie: we don't really, either, Alba. But we are working on a new DAM that I believe will be available off-campus

Linda: Alba - everything was more or less falling apart and already in the collections in Watson and Nolen.

Louis Adrean: At CMA we do not yet offer remote access to electronic resouces but we are looking into providing remote access for docents.

Rick Sieber: Ditto the PMA, Joyce. The Volunteer Offices are in our main building, while the main library is down the hill and across a very busy street. We have no remote access.

Joyce: We offer electronic access to those that we can; which isn't many

Linda: We provide remote access to all Museum staff and volunteers - for most of our resources.

Melanie Emerson: Our docents have also set up their own website to share research tips and useful information--including links to resources. I'm working the the docents to make updates and recommendations.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Our docents can access their document management system from home, where they keep a lot of collection information.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we don't have remote access to subscription databases for docents, but they can access the selected free dbs through our library opac discovery system: LibraryOneSearch, Voyager Primo.

Maggie: We do have a fair amount of docents who are not very tech-savvy, so we haven't really had a lot of requests for remote access. We have had a few.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Alba, What type of documents are available remotely to docents?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Marilyn-

Joyce: Our docents have set up there own private Facebook page for information sharing; which at times has caused education staff some anxiety

Linda: Tech-savvy-ness is a challenge but it is getting better - finally! We still have some docents who are quite clueless and it is getting more and more difficult for them.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Sorry, our docents have created a whole library of papers about the collection.

Meg: Linda, how did the class go yesterday "Mining Met Pubs and Watson Digital Collections?

Louis Adrean: Maggie, I think you've touched upon a critical factor. Many of CMA's docents are not very tech-saavy either.

Linda: Meg - thanks, very well! MetPubs is one of those newish features on our museum website that provides digital access to Met publications published since 1964 - either complete or partial access, depending on copyright issues. It is an amazing resource - but a bit quirky in some ways.

Sam Duncan: Ditto on the tech observation. Most of ours are probably a little behind, though we have a few that are ahead of the curve.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we have a volunteer Intranet, that docents can access, including label copy for docents.

Maggie: Wow, is MetPubs available to the public, Linda?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Marilyn-This document management system has worked very well for them. This is parly why our docents only come in when they really need help (I only get the difficult questions!). They all love it. And are pretty tech-savvy.

Maggie: Alba, I bet it does! How did you get such a major resource up and running? **Joyce:** That sounds wonderful Alba - is the system off the shelf or did someone in-house create it?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Our IMALabs team

Linda: Yes - MetPublications is available on the Museum's website which is on the internet. So it is available to everyone everywhere. Go to the "Research" tab, and click on MetPublications in the dropdown. It's be for finding a known publication, or an object by accession number (use the Collection Database to find the accession #).

Maggie: wow, that is awesome info, Linda. thank you!

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Hmm, I think it was partly created in house but it has been the docents adding to this resource that has created a huge library of material.

Maggie: This makes me wonder if a wiki would be good for docents.......

Linda: I've got to find out if our docents have any kind of shared communication....

Maggie: me too, Linda!

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we considered a Wiki, but instead used Tumblr, with minimal success.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Tumblr is interesting. To include collection info?

Joyce: We use a wiki platform for online exhibition information and do have a special docent page where schedules are posted; their research is made available - they do like that alot

Gwen Mayhew: Hi, I'm Gwen, also at the Met. I know that our school programs volunteers use a Weebly site to share information internally. They can access this site from home, as well as at the Museum.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson-Atkins, staff and docents and museum guides post on the Tumblr... links to websites, touring experiences, etc. We use the VolunteerNet (volunteer password protected site) to post more NAMA related content (i.e. lecture transcriptions, label copy, docent research)

Meg: The National Docent organization has a great website: <u>www.nationaldocents.org</u>. It looks like it is a great resource for all museum docents.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Marilyn-that sounds pretty similar to what we have.

Maggie: ah!

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we also send out (staff written) docent newsletter with hot links to relevant information and docent articles on interesting readings to share.

Melanie Emerson: Our docents website is also password protected and created by and for the docents...it is sounds similar to that at the Nelson-Atkins.

Joyce: One nice thing about the wiki platform as well is that it allows multiple contributors, but their access can be controlled - full edit, reader, comment only ,etc.

Melanie Emerson: Oh, I like the idea of a newsletter.

Maggie: i bet the newsletter is a lot of work......

Louis Adrean: At CMA our docent website is also password protected and created by and for the docents.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: The only concern I have with a library of docent produced papers is that, as we all know, information is constantly needing update. How long will papers be consulted. It is certainly more convenient to access this information library from home but the library can provide more current information.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson-Atkins, we send a newsletter monthly-although this is at times not enough. It's a constant challenge to determine the frequency and methods of communicating information. And the newsletter is time-consuming! But docents hold onto it and reference it for several weeks. We post upcoming information and training, gallery closings, tips for tours (and research!), and news from education departments--including the library. This is primarily staff driven, but docents contribute in various ways.

Meg: Marilyn--the newsletter is used to inform docents of library activities--how do you stay informed about docent activities?

Joyce: I agree Alba about the docent produced papers. For that same reason - as well as curators not having input that is needed at times

Rick Sieber: Agreed, Alba. We recently did a quick weed of our docent library to withdraw any egregiously outdated materials that have accumlated over the years.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Rick, Joyce-

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Meg, the Education Mangers, including the head librarian, meet weekly, and we communicate with the docent department regularly. It can be a challenge - rapid communication.

Rick Sieber: To clarify, many of the guide-created materials remain as they aren't officially "library" materials. We weren't policing, just updating where we could!

Melanie Emerson: We also provide annotated bibliographies for the paper writing assignments the docents must complete during training.

Louis Adrean: At CMA, I too meet regularly with our docent coordinator and a recently formed " Docent Special Exhibitions Task Force."

Meg: Lou, how often do you meet?

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Rick, Joyce- Linda Seckelson mentioned something in our previous practice session that I think is very relevant to this. Docents need to be familiar with the types of research materials used in Art History so they can do their own research rather than rely on collection information.

Louis Adrean: I meet with our docent coordinator about once a month. The task force meets as needed.

Maggie: Preach it, Alba!:)

Melanie Emerson: Alba, this is so true.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Lou, could you please elaborate on the goals and purpose of the docent special exhbitions task force?

Melanie Emerson: We have a hard time getting our docents to use resources beyond ISTOR.

Maggie: we recently changed the way we access our databases, and now have very few databases at all that docents may access.

Joyce: Alba, I agree - and part of it is a time issue on my end

Linda: Yes - we did a class on "resesarch strategies" in which we tried to foster understanding of basic concepts we are so familiar with already - what is an index, a bibliography, a citation/reference, a collection catalog, an exhibition catalog, a periodical/magazine/journal, etc. Many of the docents, while well-educated seem to have never done research papers like "in the old days" (I guess I'm revealing my long-in-the-tooth-ness!) and haven't a clue about these things which are in the end still relevant.

Louis Adrean: The Special Exhibitions Task Force was formed to address docent concerns regarding special exhibitions (i.e., scheduling tours, library training, interaction with othe

museum depts., updated contacts, etc..)

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, all of our dataases can be accessed anywhere on campus from a networked PC; am seeking better wireless access here for onsite access through our library discovery systtem.

Melanie Emerson: We hope the instruction sessions provide a foundation for research skills, but I think they tend to go with what is familiar.

Sam Duncan: Just an observation for what it's worth: we really coddle our docents ... they are important ambassadors for the library and archives program ... and they really appreciate the time we devote to them. They really are a dedicated bunch. I think word gets out ... so we're seeing and uptick in docent use of our services in general.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Linda-I just loved that idea. It is so important.

Melanie Emerson: Linda, we try to cover this in the sessions with the new classes, but I think it might be useful as a seperate session.

Maggie: our educators and curators give 2.5 hour long art history lectures about the permanent and special exhibits. They are on Monday mornings and they are all mandatory for docents. Unfortunately, there is no mention of any additional research needed for the docents. We are always available, but are not often used. (Clearly, I need to speak up and get on people's radars!)

Louis Adrean: I think I will plan to incorporate a class on "research strategies" as a separate session. Thanks for the idea Linda!

Linda: thanks - I think we need to cycle through this class again and offer it. I'd be glad to share what we have. Maybe we should try to share what we can that treats "generic" thinkgs like Oxford, Art Source, Jator and "research strategies" - though now that I think about it, we always use our own objects as examples for finding relevant info.

Maggie: Yes, excellent idea, Linda.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: I think this is what I will try to address with the new docent class.

Maggie: Question for all of you: do you provide ILL services for docents? **Sunyoung Park:** At the MFAH, we do not have ILL service for docents

Rick Sieber: Nor at the PMA.

Louis Adrean: At CMA we do not provide ILL services for docents.

Melanie Emerson: Maggie, we don't generally but will sometimes provide ILL through the Docent Coordinator's ILL account or our own accounts.

Iovce: Not at the Mint

Sam Duncan: Louis: love that idea of developing a "research strategies" class for the docents.

Maggie: we don't, either.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Not at the IMA either.

Linda: Yes - assuming that the ILL activity is in the service of Museum-related research - . We don't always know, but we give them the benefit of the doubt and don't question it usually. Not many docents request through ILL.

Anne Evenhaugen: The Smithsonian provides ILL for anyone with a library card (which anyone with an SI badge can get!)

Sam Duncan: We would supply ILL service to docents, yes.

Gwen Mayhew: At the Met, the docents rarely need to use ILL, but if they have a legitimate need, then we will ILL books or articles for them. Just like the rest of the collection, ILL books are library use only, and docents may not take them out of the library.

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we don't have ILL for docents, like Melanie's comment, but can request for staff coordiantor.

Maggie: With the lack of access to things like JSTOR, Art Full Text, etc -- I am worried that I will only be able to show them hard copy resources....

Meg: Pardon me, but I see we have just four minutes left...

Gwen Mayhew: Maggie, perhaps try checking with local universities to see what their access policies are. Although the docents wouldn't be able to access a university's subscription databases offsite, they may be able to access them in person at the university library.

Maggie: this is true, Gwen. thanks!

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: At the Nelson, we are open 7 days/'weekly, and docents can use and have used ressources, inlcuding dbs. We only staff the reference desk 5 days for walk-in, but docents can make appointments for individual special access too.

Meg: Are there any final questions or comments?

Gwen Mayhew: You're welcome! Look for university libraries that are Government Document repositories-- they are required to be open to the public.

Maggie: no, but this was FULL of great ideas! thanks, everyone!

Linda: This has been fun!

Marilyn Carbonell / Helen Myers: Thanj your for this session! Melanie Emerson: Agreed, this has been fun and very helpful!

Joyce: Thank you all for the great ideas

Louis Adrean: Thanks to everyone for sharing great ideas.

Alba Fernandez-Keys: Thank you for sharing! I hope to see you all in DC.

Sam Duncan: Thanks all!!

Meg: Thanks everyone for joining today! Hope everyone has a great weekend!

Linda: Yes - see you in DC!

Maggie: you too!

Sunyoung Park: Thank you all! **Rick Sieber:** Thanks everyone.

Maggie: can we get a transcript of this?

Meg: Yes, a transcript will posted on the ARLIS website within a week or so. A post will go

out on ARLIS-L when it is ready.

Maggie: perfect!

Meg: Thanks again to our guests Linda, Melanie, Lou and Alba

Meg: and thanks to Alice for hosting!

Alice Whiteside: And thanks, Meg, for organizing!

Meg: My pleasure!