

FALL 1996

from the chair

"The purpose of CMC is to promote high standards of museum practice and to foster professional growth and a spirit of cooperation among collection managers and individuals in related work fields."

With this in mind, the CMC officers met at Winedale in the beginning of July to review our plans for upcoming workshops, to look at TAM session proposals for the 1997 meeting in Midland, and to consider opportunities to expand and share our professional knowledge, resources and connections.

The 1997 annual meeting will be great. Plan now to arrive early and stay late!

* A pre-conference workshop sponsored by CMC, tentatively titled 'Forklifts, Hard-hats & White Gloves'. The topic is large object moves and covers personal safety and liability issues.

* Sessions of interest will be on collections' data automation; lenders and loans; inexpensive and easy object documentation photography, and a new day and time for the annual CMC business meeting.

* A post-conference workshop will present an in-depth look at caring for archival and ephemeral collections. The first part will cover materials identification, dating, preventative conservation, and collections care and storage techniques. The second part will concentrate on cataloging.

Hats off to Gabriela Truly, and Joanne Avant who worked on the TAM Program Committee. They did a great job!

The CMC workshop line-up through Spring of 1998 is shaping-up thanks to the hard work of Kandy Taylor-Hille. A special effort is being made to locate the workshops throughout the state, allowing more colleagues to attend. CMC will also work to expand professional growth opportunities and support for the following projects:

* Proposed TAM Environmental Monitoring Kit Project.
CMC will provide assistance for this proposed state-wide equipment loan/check-out program.

* CMC will support one issue annually of "Conservation Notes", published by the Conservation Lab, Texas Memorial Museum. This issue will be mailed free of charge to all CMC members.

* CMC supports students working toward careers in the museum field with a discount of \$5 to CMC workshops - available in the future.

It is my sincerest hope that you will find these educational opportunities and related projects useful and relevant. As always... how can CMC help you? If you've got an idea or concern, call me!

Lisa Rebori, CMC Chair

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CMC Officers 1996 - 1997

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FIRST TIME, EH?

Kandy Taylor-Hille

This past August I experienced a first in museums. While I've been actively employed in the museum field for 12 years my ability to not know things is still pretty high, experience wise, however, it's pretty much a case of "been there done that." My museum, the Fulton Mansion, lost two of its full time employees within the space of two weeks, nothing horrendous and we were prepared for the change well in advance, just bad timing. At that point the Superintendent sat down with me and asked that I be a part of the interview process for both of these positions. Mind you these are positions that are equal to mine, I do not supervise them. I have done interview panels for interpreters, interns, and even hired and fired a housekeeper or two but never for an equal position and certainly not for one over me. In the past mystery often shrouded the whole process, who applied?, who was qualified?, and why did they hire him or her? I've always thought hiring people was pretty much luck-of-the-draw. They seemed perfectly normal during the interview, but end up doing seances in the Master Bedroom to rid the house of evil spirits.

While the process did hone my interview skills somewhat, it actually provided a better perspective of how the new position is supposed to work and also something about unknown factors that seem to be clearer when there is more than one person asking questions. Also, my being part of the process seemed to state very emphatically to the participants that what we do at the Fulton Mansion is a team effort; all others need not apply. While I know you can hardly show this article to your Superintendent/Director and demand to be part of the process, it is something to think about when you're the one doing the hiring. I know the next time I hire a new interpreter or housekeeper I'm not going to be flying solo during the interview. Selecting the person "WE" want to work with is just too important a decision to be made alone.

UPDATE ON SEPTEMBER WORKSHOPKandy Taylor-Hille

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! & Pass the Keyboard! The September workshop is almost full and it is certainly going to pay for itself. We have spaces left in the men's dormitory if anyone is interested at \$175 a pop. It's shaping up to be a great workshop. If you have signed up for the workshop you have received this newsletter but not a confirmation letter call me immediately! Also, we are running shorter on computers than we'd like to be, so anyone who is coming to the conference who would like to bring their own, please give me a call at 512-729-0386 or at my new E-mail address Curator FM@Juno.Com. Yes we've finally leapt boldly into the 20th century just as it's about to end. Glaciers move faster. For those of you not able to attend September's workshop, Gary, myself and others will be giving a 90 minute version at TAM in April 1997. Hardly the same thing, but better than nothing.

A special thank-you to Lisa Rebori for hostessing a CMC board mini-retreat at Winedale in July. It was nice to get away from the phone and lunch was wonderful. Thanks bunches.

CMC Quarterly Workshops 1996 - 1997

September 19 - 22, 1996

"Taking the Soft Way", at Winedale Hist. Ctr., Round Top

Saturday, Oct. 12, 1996

"Getting down to brass tacks: Condition Reporting your Collection",
Hertzberg Circus Museum, San Antonio

Monday, Jan. 20, 1997

"Caring for Objects on Display"
Forseyth Gallery, Texas A&M, College Station

June/July 1997

'A Disastrous Experience' or 'Contingency Planning Pays'
Co-sponsorship with MAST (Mus. Assoc. of S. Tx), Laredo*In the Works*

Fall/October 1997

"Capitalizing on Collections Care"
Presented in cooperation with NIC, AMIGOS & TAM
Amon Carter Museum, Ft. Worth

Special Note: Due to circumstances beyond our control Robert Child will not be able to participate in the October 12, 1996 workshop "Cleaning Spaces with Robert Child". The new topic for this workshop is "Getting down to brass tacks: Condition Reporting Your Collection". If you have any questions please call Sally Baulch-Rhoden at 512.471.1604 or John Slate, Curator of Collection at the Hertzberg Circus Museum, 202.207.7819.

PRIORITIZING YOUR COLLECTIONS

June 17, 1996

CMC workshop hosted by the Ft Worth Museum of Science & History

Summary by Gail R. Manning

Lisa Rebori, CMC Chair, opened the workshop by introducing **Dan Otto**, President of the FWMSH, who welcomed the participants to the museum.

Gabriela Truly, workshop organizer, introduced the theme of the day: that Collection Managers must deal with curators and/or administrators in prioritizing collections care. Collection Manager must be able to evaluate the sometimes at-odds issues of use and preservation of objects and specimens in order to satisfy the museum's mission statement. Three speakers will address this evaluation process.

Renee Erwin, History Dept, FWMSH, described their two-tier collection system. Use and handling is dictated by the item's placement in one of two collection types. The Education Collection can be replicas or other expendables for hands-on examination by the public. Authentic objects are shown to the public by volunteers and are more closely monitored than the expendables. The Permanent Collection items are used only under conservation guidelines. Both collections must be available (the FWMSH estimates 25% of its collections are on exhibit), so keeping an accurate inventory is the number one priority.

Preservation and storage is the second issue. In addition to traditional storage rooms, temporary exhibits can be considered storage as well as an interpretive display. Representatives from the various museum departments (including marketing!) serve on the committee to select temporary exhibit topics. These are created by a curator who understands the collections and is aware of legalities of display (such as NAGPRA). Some examples are: hall vitrines; "treasure trove" areas; collector's/curator's corners. The added bonus of such displays is that requests to access the collections are reduced because the public can view them during regular hours.

To build collections at the FWMSH, a committee watches for estate sales and items found available during museum travel. Because storage space is limited, purchases must be agreed upon by the committee. An item can go into collection room storage (HVAC controlled), ambient room storage or "deep storage" at an offsite location. Because deep storage involves a commitment to proper packing and moving, an item must be carefully evaluated for potential future use before consigning it to the "outer realms."

Protecting the record of specimens as well as the specimens themselves is important. In planning against loss of information during a disaster, the records are being computerized (30% are catalogued now). The tape is backed-up daily and a copy is taken home by a staff member. A second copy is kept in a safe and is backed-up every 6 months. The donor record is kept off-site. There is a telephone tree for alerting persons to respond to an emergency at the FWMSH.

Because the most important can be different from the most valuable, certain objects are identified for priority removal during a disaster. This priority is assigned by either insurance or curatorial evaluation. Factoring into this are the ideas that each collection is unique in its needs; the varying demands for use; its rank in relation to the museum goal; resources available for it (both personal and institutional).

Wesley Hathaway, RN, Science Dept, FWMSH, spoke about the science collections, which are of three types: Research; Teaching; Live Animal (Research corresponds to Permanent and Teaching to Education in the History Dept). Wesley cited the common problem of shifting priorities (sometimes on a daily basis!) of conservation, curatorial research and administration in determining institutional collections care and use policy.

When do you "make do" in regards to lower priority or one on a limited budget? Wesley examined departmental goals in collections management. Administration must support the museum's mission statement. In Science, the research collection is held in trust for the future - but the budget may not allow for the "proper" method, so other means are used. For example, specimen tags can be separated from a study skin, so Wesley writes the number on the skin. Education's goal is to teach, not to be concerned about long-term storage. Its individual specimen value is low, although high in priority as to availability.

The Live Animal Collection differs from all other collections. Here Wesley assumes the total responsibility for an animal out of its habitat, so it has the highest priority in concern for daily maintenance as well as emergencies.

Bob Workman, assistant director at the Amon Carter Museum, presented a differing view. He stated that Administration's goal is to facilitate the discussion between the departments about use and care. He emphasized the importance of each employee's knowledge and commitment to the museum's mission statement in accomplishing his/her job goals. A research museum (like the Amon Carter) has more resources for long-term care compared to another art museum more interested in maintaining entertaining/exhibit space.

He asked some important questions: Museum staff take collections for granted, but what right do collections have to exist? What percent of the total budget is collections and conservation, and do they provide that percentage of importance to accomplishing

the museum's goals? How do permanent collections relate in importance to traveling exhibits?

Collection managers create the "sacred trust" necessary between donors and museums. Proper storage is the evidence of trust between the donor and the public. The museum must demonstrate that: collections are important (highlight special elements in exhibits); that it knows how to care for objects, both short- and long-term; money is necessary (once again, in proportion to other aspects of the budget).

The power of the purse: Administration gives you money to do the job-you must allocate it wisely or find the remainder you need through grants. Write 3 and 5 year plans, and find the person or institution appropriate for funding those plans. Most collection managers know they need to create long-term plans for collections care and conservation, but allow collections care to be driven by interpretation and exhibit goals.

Give collections care a voice. Have a yearly collections care meeting. Make the board aware of the collections. Complete conservation efforts for one element, showing the board you know how to do it right. Demonstrate this element to build interest and credibility. Say conservation is as important as interpretation! People who can't afford to donate objects may donate for conservation.

In adding to the collection, build toward an impact. "Preselect" from the donor- let them know you are familiar with their collections and present your conservation concerns now. Assume you'll get a windfall and plan for it- asking for storage or care funds as part of the donation. Aggressive institutions get better donations- some museums (such as Yale) get the best objects by citing limited storage space and selecting the best objects, then allow other museums to pick over the remaining items. Consider merging collections with other institutions. Most importantly, follow the mission statement in collecting.

In writing a disaster plan, remember human life comes first. In evaluating collection items, weigh its monetary value against its uniqueness. Water is the most frequent damager- even here in Tornado Alley. Get a group of institutions to meet and agree on shared response from staff and joint purchases of necessary equipment. Follow the example of the National Collections Sharing Organization (for art museums).

After a break for lunch, the Museum Tours began. Jane Drees, History Research Librarian, showed the group the **Library**. Renee opened the **History Collection** and pointed out their conservation efforts in researching the treatment of bronze disease. Wesley continued with the **Science Collection, Collection Room 2** (the uncatalogued teaching collection), and the popular **Live Animal Collection**. The workshop ended and participants were invited to visit the rest of the museum and the IMAX on their own.

Saturday, October 12th, 1996
9:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Getting down to brass tacks: Condition Reporting your Collection

Hosted by
The Hertzberg Circus Museum
210 Market Street
San Antonio Texas 78205

Condition Reporting...what is it and how does it impact your collections? Condition reporting is getting down to the brass tacks...and bone, wood or whatever your collections are made of and determining what the physical condition is. Learn to look beyond the historical, artistic or scientific value of your collections to determine the condition and what actions are appropriate based on condition (ex. length and requirements for exhibition, loan, etc.). A panel of conservators will discuss and define the most common areas to examine when doing a condition report. Bring your condition report form on a transparency and the group will make suggestions for improvement.

9:00-9:30 a.m.	Coffee and registration
9:30-10:00	Introduction
10:00-12:00	Session and tour
12:00-1:30	Lunch
1:30-4:00	Session and hands on condition reporting

Registration Fee:

<input type="checkbox"/> CMC Member	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-member	\$25.00
<input type="checkbox"/> CMC Membership	\$10.00

Please make checks payable to the Collection Managers Committee (Federal I.D.#752253189) and mail to::Sally Baulch, CMC Treasurer, Texas Memorial Museum, 2400 Trinity, Austin TX 78705

Name and Institution

Address, City, State and Zip

Phone Number

CMC NEWS

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Bruce Lipscombe, Editor

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A non-profit affinity group of the Texas Association of Museums

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For workshop registration information contact:

Sally Baulch

Texas Memorial Museum

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