

Collection Managers Committee

NEWSLETTER

FALL 1998

The Environmental Monitoring Kit Project

The goal of the Environmental Monitoring Kit Project is to strengthen the ability of museums in Texas to take proper care of their collections.

The work of preservation rests on the professional knowledge of museum staff and volunteers responsible for the care of a vast array of collections held by institutions throughout Texas. Collections objects are threatened by factors inherent in their physical structure, and by the way in which they are stored or exhibited. Major factors contributing to the longevity of an object's life include careful handling, protection from pollution, appropriate temperature, and relative humidity levels, and reducing levels of visible and ultraviolet light. One of the first steps to preserving museum collections is to monitor the environmental conditions that may lead to damage and deterioration of objects. Monitoring is part of an overall risk management program.

Six complete kits have been created, one for each of the regional museum groups in the Texas Association of Museums. Equipment in each kit allows for the measurements of visible and UV light, and temperature and relative humidity over time. (Kit inventory can be found on page 3.) This project provides support for museum staff in three ways:

- (1) it educates staff, volunteers and trustees about collections care and the importance of proper environmental conditions.
- (2) it provides quality equipment at a low cost to help evaluate conservation needs, and
- (3) it demystifies and familiarizes museum staff with equipment which they might later have the opportunity to purchase.

A kit keeper has volunteered to serve as the registered liaison for this project, to maintain and distribute the kit in each region. Kits may be ordered and distributed by the regional Kit Keepers.

The project was conceived of by the members of the Texas Association of Museums and the Collection Managers Committee. The project is supported in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, The Meadows Foundation and the Collection Managers Committee.

Kits will be available after October 15, 1998. To arrange for a kit, contact your Kit Keeper (see page 3). They will send out a loan agreement, schedule and arrange for shipping. Round-trip shipping costs will be paid by the borrower. Questions? Call Sandy Sage, Program Associate, Texas Association of Museums at 512.328.6812 (tel.) or 1.888.842.7491 (toll free tel.), or tam@io.com (e-mail).

State Accreditation Program

By Dr. Eileen Johnson, Valerie Butler, and Susan Baxevanis

The Texas Historical Commission has adopted the concept of state accreditation of repositories and museums as a prerequisite for institutions wanting to hold State of Texas permit-related collections (see Section 41.27 (c)(2) of the Antiquities Code). Texas museums can avail themselves of the American Association of Museums accreditation program. But repositories (defined as a permanent, not-for-profit education or research-oriented agency or institution that provides in-perpetuity legal housing and curation of records and material collections; e.g., Texas Archeological Research Lab, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department) are not eligible for this national program. Therefore, a state accreditation program has been developed to include repositories in the process and treat both types of curatorial facilities equally. Implementation of this ruling begins in the year 2000. The Council of Texas Archeologists adopted Curation Guidelines in 1984 and established the Accreditation and Review Council (ARC) to implement the concepts put forward in the Curation Guidelines. Instituted in 1991, ARC has developed a Texas-based accreditation program modeled on the national program. To be eligible to hold state held-in-trust collections, museums and repositories in Texas are being required by the Texas Historical Commission (the permitting agency) to be accredited by ARC and thereby demonstrating that they meet credible standards of collections care and museum management.

The Accreditation and Review Council program is aimed at ensuring that museums and repositories are accountable for and demonstrate responsible care for archeological collections generated from public lands, coastal waters, and projects in Texas. Whether in a museum or a repository, these collections are held-in-trust for the people and State of Texas; institutions have both legal and ethical obligations in providing the best care possible within their institutional resources. Even though great strides have been made, anthropological collections in general, and archeological collections in particular, still are in a crisis situation throughout this country in terms of their long-term care and management. Although several federal agencies now have curation standards for federally-associated collections, few states have such standards for state-associated collections. Those states now with standards have adopted the standards from one of the federal agencies. Texas is the only state to have adopted guidelines developed specifically for state-associated collections and the only state to have a system of accreditation that insures those guidelines and sound museum practices are followed.

An archeological repository/museum desiring accreditation initiates the process with an application form provided by ARC. A non-refundable processing fee accompanies the application form and is sent to the ARC Secretary-Treasurer. The applicant then receives a self-evaluation form to be completed and returned within six months from receipt. The areas of concern being addressed by ARC include: governance; finance; policies and procedures; physical facilities; staff; research access; records; and collections care. The ARC assesses the self-evaluation and notifies the applicant of approval or rejection of the application. Approval signifies that the applicant repository/museum appears on paper to meet the minimum standards for accreditation. Rejection is due to failure to meet on paper the standards of accreditation or fulfill some part of the basic definition and role of a repository or museum. The applicant may institute an appeal if it feels that the application was rejected improperly. If the application has been approved, the next phase is the field review. The field review is a physical, on-site review of the applying institution by a team of two field reviewers. The field reviewers are supplied with the self-evaluation and comments from the ARC assessment. They are to follow up on any questions or problems the council may have noted from the self-evaluation. The expenses of the field reviewers are paid by the applicant institution. The review team completes the physical evaluation and submits a written narrative and recommendation to ARC. The ARC then reviews all material and suggestions from the field reviewers and comes to a decision on accreditation.

The Accreditation and Review Council is looking for qualified people to perform field reviews. The next training session for field reviewers is scheduled for October 22nd to 23rd in Waco. Anyone interested in becoming a field reviewer or wanting more information about the process of accreditation should contact the ARC Chair, Dr. Eileen Johnson at the Museum of Texas Tech University, Box 43191, Lubbock, Texas 79409-3191; or e-mail at mxegi@ttacsttu.edu.

Kit Keepers

South East Texas Museum Association (SETMA)

Carolyn Spears, Curator
Stone Ft. Museum
P.O. Box 6075, SFASU
Nacogdoches, Texas 75962
tel. 409.468.2408
fax. 409.468.1001
f_spearsca@titan.sfasu.edu

Central Texas Museum Association (CTMA)

Melinda Herzog, Curator
Gov. Bill & Vera Daniel Historic Village
P.O. Box 97154
Waco, Texas 76798-7154
tel. 254.710.1160 (Main office)
tel. 254.710.4624 (Melinda's office)
fax. 254.710.1173 (C/o Strecker)
Melinda_Herzog@baylor.edu

North Texas Museum Association (NTMA)

Leishawn Spotted-Bear
Assistant Collections Manager/Science
Fort Worth Museum of Science & History
1501 Montgomery Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107-3079
tel. 817.255.9323
fax. 817.732.7635
FWMSH@METRONET.COM

Panhandle-Plains Museum Association (PMA)

Richard Trela
Director, Conservation Center
Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum
WTAMU Box 967
Canyon, Texas 79016
tel. 806.651.2241
fax. 806.651.2250
(e-mail temp. out of order)

Permian Basin Museum Association (PBMA)

Letha Hooper, Collections Manager
Ellen Noel Art Museum
4909 E. University
Odessa, Texas 79762
tel. 915.362.6071
fax. 915.368.9226

Museum Association of South Texas (MAST)

Kandy Taylor-Hille, Curator
Fulton Mansion SHP
P.O. Box 1859
Fulton, Texas 78358
tel. 512.729.0386
fax. 512.729.6581

Equipment included in each kit:

- (1) Visible light meter, paddle type
- (1) Light Damage slide rule
- (1) HOBO Data logger, Onset Corp.
- (1) Datalogger software, Onset Corp.
- (1) Digital Thermo-hygrometer, Radio Shack
- (2) Thermo-hygrometers, ARTEN
- (1) Re-calibration kit, ARTEN
- (1) Fan Operated Psychrometer
- (1) Remote temperature probe
- (2) Items for the Users to keep:
 - Humidity indicator card
 - Blue wool fade cards

Supporting printed materials:

Instruction Manual for the TAM Traveling
Environmental Monitoring Kit
The Museum Environment by Garry Thomson
Caring for Your Collections, the National
Committee to Save America's
Collections
Salvage Wheel

(1) UV Light meter is available, by separate
request from the TAM Office.

If you have any questions about the instruments,
instructions, or supplies and services lists that
accompany the EMK, please contact the Texas
Association of Museums at 1.888.842.7491, or one of
the Kit Keepers listed.

REVIEW OF "DO I STILL NEED NAILPOLISH" WORKSHOP

by Sally Baulch-Rhoden

A capacity crowd attended the workshop, "Do I Still Need Nailpolish: Numbering Objects in the New Millennium" held at the Dr Pepper Museum in Waco. High and low tech techniques were featured throughout the combination hands-on and lecture style workshop. Workshop leader, Gayle S. Clements, conservator with the Gilcrease Museum of Tulsa Oklahoma, has worked for years documenting styles of numbering objects. Clements is currently working on a book entitled, *"The Numbering of Objects for Museums, Historical Houses and Private Collections"*.

Gayle spoke on the need to standardize the marking of museum objects and gave participants a conservator's view on materials needed to safely put museum numbers on artifacts.

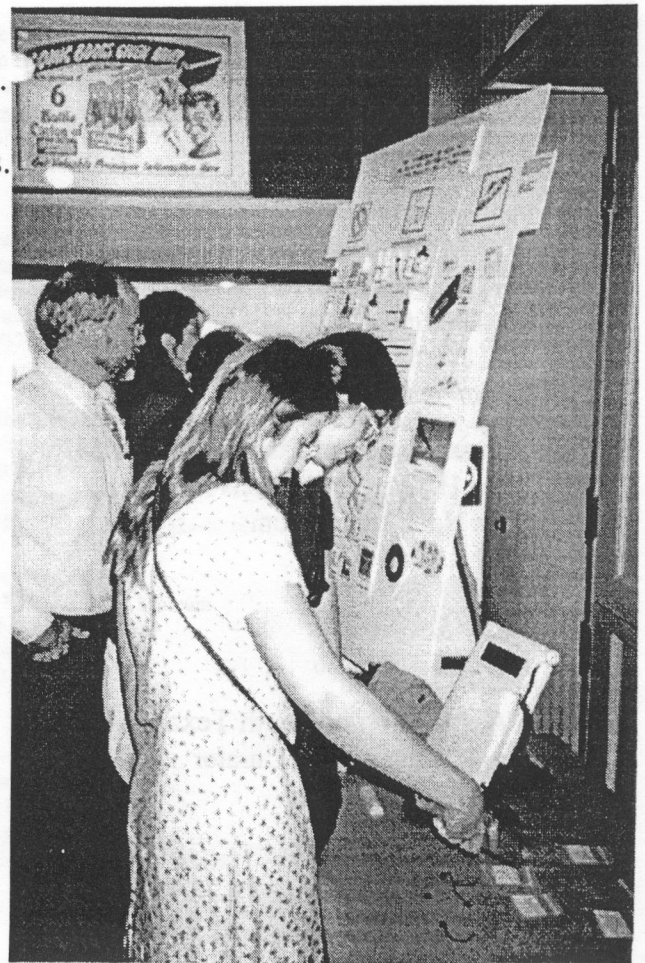
Also at the workshop was a representative of the BioMedic Data Systems who tantalized the audience with a presentation of the future of numbering objects using radio frequency transponder technology. BioMedic Data Systems (BDS) is working with the Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian, to label specimens with small radio devices. When a wand is waved over the object (similar to Superman's failing, it can't read through metal) the accession number, catalog data and record of access reads on a computer screen. I slipped into a reverie of being able to walk into any storage space or exhibit hall without cursing that I had forgotten to bring that one last catalog card...then the \$7000 price tag woke me up. But the presentation was fascinating and I can dream.

The radio transponder on the object is a non-powered silicon chip (no battery to leak) encased in either glass or a plastic (yet to be determined). The lifespan of the plastic casing is estimated at 200 years (probably about the same as the object itself).

The hands-on section involved testing a variety of objects with base coats, paints, inks and leads, tags and label, ties. When this workshop is repeated, this section will be modified so that each participant has a bag with test strips.

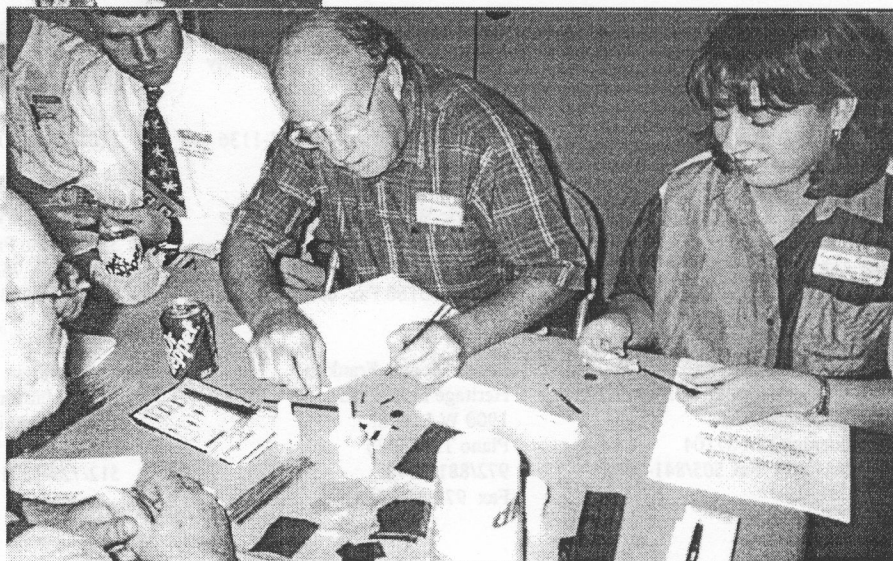
Gayle Clements encouraged the participants to document materials tested:

1. Draw a diagram if at all possible.
2. List diagram in the order of the following:
 - Protective Coat - Top Layer
 - Numbering Media - Markers, Pens, etc.
(sandwiched in the middle of the varnishes)
 - Base Coat - Bottom Layer
3. Have a standard form designed for that purpose.
4. Attach copies from catalogs showing materials used so future generations will know what works well.
5. Write the information in pencil so no offgassing.
6. Date and sign your name or initials on the form.



WORKSHOPS 1998-1999

- September 14, 1998 *Crossing Lines , The Ins & Outs of International, Interstate & Intrastate Shipping Workshop, Houston*
Sponsored by the Houston Museum of Natural Science & History & CMC
- September 19, 1998 *Tool Time: Environmental Monitoring for Museums, Waco*
Sponsored by TAM
- October 3, 1998 *Tool Time: Environmental Monitoring for Museums, Lubbock*
Sponsored by TAM
- October 19-20, 1998 *ALI-ABA Course Study in Historic Preservation Law, Savannah, Georgia*
Sponsored by ALI-ABA
- November 2, 1998 *Building a Policy & Procedure Manual for Your Collection, Lufkin*
Sponsored by TAM
- November 14, 1998 *Conservation Roundtable, Dallas*
Sponsored by TAM
- January 25, 1999 *Framing & Matting Workshop, San Antonio*
Sponsored by the McNay Art Museum and CMC
- March 24-27, 1999 *TAM Annual Meeting, Fort Worth*
- March 25, 1999 *CMC Annual Meeting, Fort Worth*



CMC Membership

Bill Allen
Henderson Phillips Fine Arts
4525 Wilshire Blvd. Ste 204
Los Angeles CA 90010
213/933-3770 Fax 213/933-1173

Mary B. Arnold
Gonzales Memorial Museum
414 Smith
Gonzales TX 78629
210/672-6350

Sally Baulch-Rhoden
Texas Memorial Museum
2400 Trinity
Austin TX 78705-5730
512/471-1604 FAX 512/471-4794

George Baumgardner
Dept. of Wildlife &
Fisheries Science
Texas A&M University
College TX 77843
409/845-5783
FAX 409/862-7750

Susan Baxevanis
Museum TTU Box 4391
Lubbock TX 79409-3191

Jay Black
Texas Sports Hall of Fame
1108 S University Parks Dr
Waco TX 76706
254/756-1633 Fax 254/756-2384

Valerie Bluthardt
San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts
PO Box 3092
San Angelo TX 76902
915/658-4084 Fax 915/659-2407

Charles Bogle
Fort Wolters/VHPA Museum
6429 Chauncery Place
Fort Worth TX 76116-8148
817/777-2923

Terese Buckley
American Airpower Heritage Museum
1617 West Pine Avenue
Midland TX 79705
915/567-3010 Fax 915/567-3047

Charles Carroll
4100 Greenbriar, #246
Houston TX 77098

Rick Casagrande
Casagrande Appraisals
8546 Broadway Ste 270 B
San Antonio TX 78217
210/820-3535

Nancy Clendenen
North Louisiana Military
Museum
791 Harper Bottom Road
Ruston LA 71270
318/251-0070

Jennifer Cook
Mary Kay Inc.
16251 Dallas Parkway
Dallas TX 75248
972/687-5889

George Cormier
RR 2 Box 173 A
Port Lavaca TX 77979

Ray Drummond
Museum of the Horse
PO Box 40
Ruidoso NM 88346
505/378-4142 Fax 505/378-4166

Gary Eastty
International Museum of
Cultures
7500 West Camp Wisdom
Dallas TX 75236
972/708-7406 Fax 972/708-7341

Tom Forbes
Fort Wolters/VHPA Museum
3950 Fossil Creek Blvd Ste 205
Fort Worth TX 76137-2746
817/232-2990

Nancy Godsey
Matagorda County Museum
4 Holly Lane
Bay City TX 77414
409/245-1222

Brenda L. Haes
3320 1/2 20th St
Lubbock TX 79410-1412
806/799-4161

Elaine Harmon
Fort Davis National Historic
Site
PO Box 1456
Fort Davis TX 79734
915/426-3224 Fax 915/426-3122

Wesley Hathaway
Ft Worth Museum of Science
& History
1501 Montgomery St
Fort Worth TX 76107
817/255-9323
Fax 817/732-7635

Nancy Hixon
Sarah Campbell Blaffer Galley
114 Fine Arts Bldg, UH
Houston TX 77004
713/743-9524 Fax 713/743-9525

Kate Hogue
John E. Conner Museum
Station 1, Box 2171
Kingsville TX 78363
512/593-2852
Fax 512/593-2112

Tracy Holmes
Ft Worth Museum of Science
& History
1501 Montgomery St
Fort Worth TX 76107
817/255-9547 Fax 817-732-7635

Rebecca Huffstutler
4524 N New Braunfels
San Antonio TX 78209

Sherry Humphreys
Star of the Republic Museum
PO Box 317
Washington TX 77880
409/878-2461 Fax 409/878-2462

Reba Jones
Amarillo Museum of Art
PO Box 447
Amarillo TX 79178
806/371-5050 Fax 806/373-9235

Timothy Kirwin
Houston Fire Museum
2403 Milam St
Houston TX 77006
713/524-2526 Fax 713/520-7566

Janice Klein
The Field Museum
Roosevelt Rd at Lake Shore Dr
Chicago IL 60605
312/922-9410 Fax 312/427-7269

Nicky Ladkin
Museum of Texas Tech University
PO Box 43191
Lubbock TX 79409-3191
806/742-2479 Fax 806/742-1136

Heather Lammers
McNay Art Museum
PO Box 6069
San Antonio TX 78209
210/805-1730 Fax 210-824-0218

Vincent Leibowitz
American Cotton Museum
PO Box 347
Greenville TX 75402-0347
903/450-4502

Leah Lewis Simpson
Institute of Texan Cultures
801 S Bowie
San Antonio TX 78205
210/458-2297 Fax 210/458-2218

Bruce Lipscombe
Historic Waco Foundation
810 S 4th St
Waco TX 76706
254/753-5166 Fax call ahead

Edward Luttenberger
Fort Wolters/VHPA Museum
3500 Pecan Park Drive
Flower TX 75028
972/355-1213

Rachel Mauldin
San Antonio Museum of Art
200 W Jones Ave
San Antonio TX 78215
210/978-8117 Fax 210-978-8128

Jackie McConachie
New Mexico Museum of Natural History
1801 Mountain NW
Albuquerque NM 87104
505/841-2854 Fax 505/841-2866

Lolisa Moores-Franklin
Heritage Farmstead
1900 W 15th St
Plano TX 75075
972/881-0140
Fax 972/422-6481

Robin Moran
Texas Maritime Museum
1202 Navigation Circle
Rockport TX 78382
512/729-1271 Fax 512/729-9938

Marie Neff
OS Ranch Foundation Museum
PO Box 790
Post TX 79356
806/495-3570 Fax 806/495-2288

(Continued on page 7)

CMC Membership

Susan Newlin
Fine Arts Express
465 W 38th St
Houston TX 77018
713/691-5461 Fax 713/691-0123

Jack Nokes
Texas Association of Museums
3939 Bee Caves Rd, Bldg A, Ste 1-B
Austin TX 78746
512/328-6812 Fax 512/328-9775

Cindy Porter
1409 Enfield, Apt 9
Austin TX 78703

Lisa Rebori
Houston Museum of Natural
Science
One Hermann Circle Dr
Houston TX 77030
713/639-4670 Fax 713/523-
4125

Dan Rockwell
Meadows Museum at SMU
Bishop at Binkley
Dallas TX 75275-0356
214/768-7344 Fax 214/768-1688

Kathleen Roland
Fort Concho NHL
630 S Oakes St
San Angelo TX 76903
915/657-4440 Fax 915/657-4540

Carolyn Rose
Heritage House Museum
905 W Division
Orange TX 77630
409/886-5385 Fax 409/886-0917

Judy Shofner
Dr. Pepper Museum & Free
Enterprise
300 S 5th St
Waco TX 76701
254/757-1025 Fax 254/757-
2221

Carolyn Spears
Stone Fort Museum
PO Box 6075, SFASU
Nacogdoches TX 75962
409/468-2408 Fax 409/468-7084

Leishawn Spotted Bear
Ft Worth Mus. Science & History
1501 Montgomery St
Fort Worth TX 76107-3079
817/255-9323 Fax 817/732-7635

Beth Szscila
9546 Enstone Circle
Spring TX 77379

Bruce Taylor-Hille
Southwest Museum Services
718 N Liveoak St
Rockport TX 78382
512/790-7766 Fax 512/765-
6627

Kandy Taylor-Hille
Fulton Mansion
PO Box 1859
Fulton TX 78358
512/729-0386 Fax 512/729-6581

Sheila Thornton
MSC Forsyth Center Galleries
Box J-1
College TX 77844-9081
409/845-9251 Fax 409/845-5117

Gabriela Truly
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 North Harwood
Dallas TX 75201
214/922-1267 Fax 214/969-5913

Ali Turley
State Preservation Board
201 E 14th St Ste 950
Austin TX 78701
512/475-4982 Fax 512/475-
4886

Milly Walker
Dr Pepper Museum/Free Enterprise

Waco TX 76701
254/757-1025 Fax 254/757-2221

Vernon Weckbacher
McAllen International Museum
1900 Nolana
McAllen TX 78504
956/682-1564 Fax 956/686-1813

Beth Williamson
Southwest Museum Services
700 Seawall Blvd #412
Galveston TX 77551
409/741-9445 Fax Call first

Mac Woodward
Sam Houston Memorial
Museum
PO Box 2057 SHSU
Huntsville TX 77341
409/294-1832 Fax 409/294-
3670

Jodi Wright-Gidley
Bell County Museum
PO Box 1381
Belton TX 76513
254/933-5243 Fax 254/933-5756

T.J. Zalar
Lone Star Flight Museum
PO Box 3099
Galveston TX 77552-0099
409/740-7722 Fax 409/740-7612

Joan Zalenski
Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art
309 Main St
Fort Worth TX 76102
817/332-6554

CMC Officers 1997-1998

Sally Baulch-Roden, Chair
Texas Memorial Museum
2400 Trinity
Austin, Texas 78705-5730
tel. 512.471.1604
fax. 512.471.4794
e-mail sbaulch@mail.utexas.edu

Heather Lammers, Secretary
McNay Art Museum
P.O. Box 6069
San Antonio, Texas 78209-0069
tel. 210.824.5368
fax. 210.824.0218

Gabriella Truly, Vice Chair
Dallas Museum of Art
1717 North Harwood
Dallas, Texas 75201-2398
tel. 214.922.1267
fax. 214.969.5913
e-mail gtruly@hotmail.com

Judy Shofner, Officer-at Large
Dr. Pepper Museum
300 South 5th Street
Waco, Texas 76701
tel. 254.757.1025
fax. 254-757.2221

Lisa Rebori, Past Chair
Houston Museum of Natural Science
No. 1 Hermann Circle Drive
Houston, Texas 77030-1799
tel. 713.639.4670
fax. 713.523.4125
e-mail lrebori@hmns.mus.tx.us

Sheila Thornton, Treasurer
MSC Forsyth Center Galleries
Box J-1
College Station, Texas 77844-9081
tel. 409.845.9251
fax. 409.845.5117
e-mail sheila@msc.tamu.edu

Kathleen Roland, Officer-at-Large
Fort Concho NHL
630 S. Oakes Street
San Angelo, Texas 76903-7013
tel. 915.657.4440
fax. 915.657.4540
e-mail hqtrs.fortconcho.com
(Attn. Kathy Roland)

For additional information, please call the Dallas Museum of Art at 214-922-1267

**Crossing the Lines: The Ins and Outs of
International, Interstate & Intrastate Shipping**
Houston Airport, Houston
a fund raising workshop
Hosted by the Houston Museum of Natural Science &
the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
Monday, September 14, 1998

A workshop presented by the Collection Managers Committee
A nonprofit affinity group of the Texas Association of Museums

CMC NEWSLETTER

c/o Fort Concho National Historic Landmark
630 S. Oakes St.
San Angelo, TX 76903-7013

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