

Newsletter
Spring Issue 2004

COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE

Dancing Around the Disasters

by Lynne A. Littrell
Sam Bell Maxey House

In order to fulfill my obligations to CMC for the generous travel stipend they awarded me in order to attend TAM this year, I had to write a summary of one of the TAM sessions. I thought 'Oh, no problem I'll do *Working in Concert: Fine-tuning the Exhibition Process*. Then I sat down to write it and realized there is no way that I could possibly do as eloquent of a job as Ruth Ann Rugg, Eric Smith, or Gabriela Truly. But here goes.

I did find it interesting to know that the number one tool we all need when dealing with the exhibition process is a professional glue gun to the tune of about \$150.00. We will see how well I do in convincing the State of Texas that they need to put that in the budget. Although a good glue gun would make my day, as well as a few sheets of e-foam and some time to actually put some exhibits together, there were a few other excellent points the speakers made.

If a good glue gun were all I needed I would be in great shape, but Ruth Ann and Gabriela also added the need to communicate EARLY and the ability to BE FLEXIBLE and REMAIN CALM under pressure. Well . . . we all may have to work on those. Of course, the best advice given was to avoid problems by communicating effec-

tively to everyone involved and maintaining a steady communication through the entire planning and installation process of an exhibit. Of course, not all museums represented at TAM have the opportunity to walk down the hall and talk to someone about the upcoming exhibit. Some TAM professionals would have to look in the bathroom mirror in order to have a conversation. For those individuals – use your NETWORK of TAM friends and if all else fails try OUTSOURCING.

One of the most important issues that was addressed during the session was the fact that the integrity of a museum cannot be balanced with the checkbook. Although we are all hard-pressed to find the time to perform the basic functions of our jobs, we need to take time to maintain good policies when dealing with collections, donors, and stakeholders. Although it is hard to pass up a large gift, beware of the strings that come attached to it.

And I will leave you with the same message that the session left me with "relax, have fun, enjoy your job – after all, yours isn't the first museum to have a major exhibit centerpiece not show up in time for the opening reception."

Join the CMC E-Mail Group

It's almost that time again! The Collection Managers Committee of the Texas Association of Museums is a dynamic alliance chartered in 1988 as an affinity group of the Texas Association of Museums. CMC is open to anyone in the non-profit sector or private sector that performs tasks related to the care and management of museum collections. Whatever your position or level of expertise in the museum field, you can benefit personally as well as contribute to the profession by joining CMC. You are invited to submit articles or other materials to the newsletter, participate in the development of state-wide workshops or organize a workshop at your institution. This e-mail list is intended as a way for CMC members to build networks and to communicate with each other about issues of mutual concern.

There are two ways to become a member of the group:

1. E-mail invitation (see attached pages for a copy of the e-mail invitation and sign-up screens)

Sign-up via the homepage at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CollectionManagers/>

Choose how you would like to receive your messages:

There are two ways that you can choose to receive e-mails from the group. You can change your preference at any time.

Individual e-mails – If you choose this option you will receive all new postings via e-mail as soon as they are sent.

Daily Digest – In this option a digest of all postings for a single day is sent as a single e-mail. You will still be able to follow the thread of topics, but may not be aware of discussions as they occur. This is a good option for those who do not like to receive a lot of e-mail.

How to post a message:

E-mail CollectionManagers@yahoogroups.com to send a message to the entire group.

To change your preferences:

If you need to change any of your personal preferences (i.e. the e-mail address at which you receive postings, switch from individual e-

mail to daily digest, etc.), you may click on the "Edit My Membership" link on the upper right side of the homepage.

To unsubscribe or leave the group:

Send an e-mail to CollectionManagers-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com and your name will be removed from the group.

Additional features:

If you visit the homepage at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CollectionManagers/> you can use these additional features:

- Calendar
- Membership List
- Chat
- Polls
- File sharing

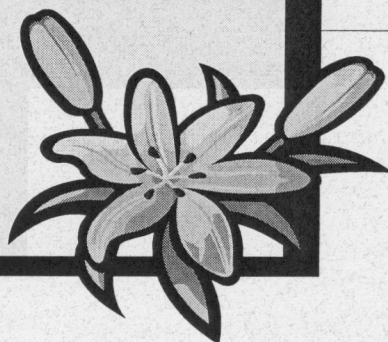
Basic "Netiquette"

1. Only reply to an e-mail if your response directly relates to that. If you want to introduce a new topic, start a new e-mail.
2. If you are responding to a long e-mail, delete portions of the text that do not relate to your reply.
3. Never send an e-mail written in all caps. The use of all caps is used to imply that you are angry or shouting when used in an e-mail or chat room and may offend some.

CMC is open to anyone in the non-profit sector or private sector that performs tasks related to the care and management of museum collections.



From the Chair



It seems like just yesterday many of us were chatting in person at the TAM Annual Meeting in Waco. It was great to see so many of you there. The CMC booth in the exhibit hall has turned out to be a great forum through which CMC members can gather and network during the annual meeting—we'll continue to have a booth or resource table at future annual meetings.

And speaking of opportunities to network: as most of you should know by now, CMC has recently started an e-mail group listserv through the Yahoo Groups service. We envision the listserv as a way for CMC members to build networks and to communicate with each other. In addition to being able to exchange messages with the entire list of members, this service gives us the ability to post documents in a file sharing/resource area. Handouts from several of the collections-related sessions at TAM have already been posted to the group. We will continue to add documents of interest to CMC members—and if you have something that might be of interest, please feel free to post it! Those of you for whom we have accurate e-mail addresses should already have received invitations to join the group—and many of you have

done so! For more information on the e-mail group and how to join, see "Join the CMC E-mail Group" elsewhere in this newsletter. Many thanks and kudos are due to Amy Fulkerson for her hard work in managing and setting up this great new resource for CMC members!

The CMC scholarship/travel stipend recipients this year were Rene Gonzales of the Witte Museum, Lynne Littrell of the Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site, and Susan Smyer of Battleship Texas. All three have contributed reviews from the Annual Meeting which you can read elsewhere in this newsletter. Jennifer Cook, our newsletter editor, and I would like to thank all three scholarship recipients for their promptness and insights.

Reminder: if you have not yet renewed your membership for 2004, please do so as soon as possible!

And finally, watch your mailboxes and your e-mail for word about upcoming CMC workshops!

Megan Bryant, Chair

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possible!*

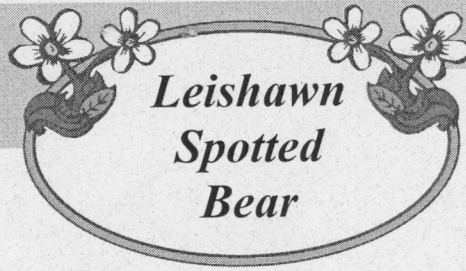
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Member Spotlight



Collections Manager, Science Dept

Fort Worth Museum
of Science and History

"So, *you* take care of the dead things in jars?"

Perhaps this phrase is not the most flattering aspect of my job, but it is most memorable to those I meet at the Museum. The "dead" things in jars, flat skins, taxidermy items, as well as live animals, shape our science collection at the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. I oversee the research and teaching collections, provide natural history specimens and lecture with live animals for Museum School®, and work with local teachers through our specimen loan program and educator workshops.

I never dreamed I would be working at a museum, and certainly not in collections. I volunteered my senior year in high school and became hooked. While pursuing a degree in elementary education, I began working part-time at the Museum. From performing science demonstrations and working as a lab tech to being an assistant volunteer coordinator, and OMNI Theater console/projectionist, I experienced many aspects of museum life, which as many of you know, changes when you become full-time. Since 1993, I have been fortunate to work amongst the collections. It is amazing how people are affected by these natural specimens; hearing their own perceptions and fears, their "true" stories, and of their willingness to share personal information. I

have listened to many interesting tales and tried to dispel some myths. The remains of an alien family (fossilized oysters) found in a creek bed, "prairie dogs that bite down to the *black* blood", a boa constrictor that smiled when petted, and people's claims showing photos of crossbred animals (the dog-horse or "dorse") are the most amusing.

It is the balance of thinking scientifically, retaining your sense of humor, and being able to adapt that makes this job a challenge. Every day is unpredictable. I could be preparing a "bird on a stick," showing the keeled scales of a live snake, or identifying a critter brought in by a visitor. Flexible, fun, and often frenzied – that is life in the Science Department.



What is Ali-Aba?

by

Gabriela Truly

Director of Collections Management

Dallas Museum of Art

Some colleagues asked me "what is ALI-ABA" after I made a reference to it during a conversation. So I decided to write a little something about it for those who are not familiar with this group.

In 1947 the American Bar Association (ABA) asked the American Law Institute (ALI) to collaborate in organizing a national program of continuing education of the bar.

These many years later, the two come together as ALI-ABA and host a multitude of continuing education programs for those in the "law" business. Once each year, they organize a conference on "Legal Problems of Museum Administration." For 2 ½ days your head is swimming with information pertaining to any and all aspects of museum law.

This year the focus was on several topics: Trustees/Staff Fiduciary Duties, Restricted Gifts, Gift Agreements, Expenditure from Endowment Funds, Copyright Issues, Managing Employee Leaves, Digitization, Downsizing, International Loans and Exhibitions, etc.

Many of the speakers are lawyers specializing in one area or another, and there are also speakers from the museum community (including Registrars!!!), as well as other areas. Although the topics are heavy and sometimes the information is complex – it is the best conference to attend, at least once, to experience this rush of the best legal information around. This year the sessions were relevant, informative and most of them not difficult to understand. Yes, I skipped the Tax Update – too much for my brain!

The "Course of Study Materials," as they refer to their "handout," is a 500 + pages book containing copies of all the presentations made by all the speakers. Sometimes it is the actual written presentation, sometimes it is the handouts, sometimes it is both.

Something like 500 participants with perhaps a third from the museum community come together for this. I heard several people say this year that, as far as they knew, every Registrar who applies for their scholarship – receives it. The "tuition" is \$795. BUT, if you apply for the scholarship and get it (again, it seems all Registrars do); they cover it. To apply for the scholarship you have to send a statement justifying the scholarship request and a copy of your resume.

The conference mostly takes place in March or early April. If you are truly interested, and you should be, go to www.ali-aba.org to find out how to get on the mailing list to receive their advance brochure. This brochure has the dates, list of topics, speakers, hotel information, deadlines for scholarship, etc.

Remember this summer (or whenever you start working on your budget for next year) to include money for hotel, airfare and per diem so you can attend next year, in *San Francisco*.

Happy learning!



Minutes-Collection Managers Committee- Annual Business Meeting

March 31, 2004, Waco, Texas

Submitted by Trey Reed, Secretary

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Megan Bryant called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m. and welcomed new and returning members. Megan called attention to Rebecca Huffstutler for anyone who needed to renew his or her membership or join CMC.

BUSINESS REPORTS TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Secretary's Report

The chair directed everyone's attention to the minutes for the Annual Business Meeting for 2003 and called for a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Kandy Taylor-Hille and Gabriela Truly so moved; the report was approved.

Treasurer's Report

The Chair recognized Rebecca Huffstutler, Treasurer. Rebecca distributed a current treasurer's report showing a balance of \$984.93 as of March 30, 2004. The Committee began the year with a balance of \$1618.14 and subsequently earned \$935.00 from memberships, donations and programming. Funds supported \$595.00 in membership scholarships to attend the Annual Meeting and \$1,000 underwriting for the Annual Meeting. Some discussion was made concerning bank charges and the possibility of looking into a different banking institution. Megan called for a motion to accept the Treasurer's report as presented. Kandy Taylor-Hille and Gabriela Truly so moved; the report was approved.

Vice Chair Report

The Chair asked Vice Chair Carolyn Spears to review workshops for the past year. Carolyn provided a full report on four workshops in 2003, including *Managing the Collection Environment* at Houston Annual Meeting, *Is it Real or is it Faux? Having Fun with Fake Food* at George Ranch Historical Park, Richmond, and *Care & Preservation of Photographic Collections*, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth and *Collection Managers Beware! Mitigating Mold* at Carraba Conservation, Austin. Megan called for a motion to accept the report as presented. Kandy Taylor-Hille and Gabriela Truly so moved; the report was approved.

Officer at Large and Editor Report

Megan recognized Jennifer Cook, Officer at Large and Editor, thanking her for working so hard on the newsletter during the past year. Jennifer noted the upcoming deadline for newsletter submissions is April 20, 2004.

Chairs Report

Megan recognized the scholarship recipients for 2004. They were Lynn Lytrell, Sam Bell Maxey House State Historic Site, Susan Smyer, Battleship Texas State Historical Site and Rene Gonzales, Witte Museum.

change. Trey Reed moved from Officer at Large to fill her term and Kim Cupit was then appointed to fill the term of Officer at Large.

Megan then asked Secretary Trey Reed to present the slate of new officers:

Chair (2004-2006): Megan Bryant, The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

Vice Chair (2003-2005): Carolyn Spears, Stone Fort Museum

Secretary (2003-2005): Trey Reed, Fort Bend Museum/George Ranch Historical Park

Treasurer (2004-2006): Rebecca Huffstutler, Witte Museum

Officer at Large/Editor (2003-2005): Jennifer Cook, Mary Kay Museum

Officer at Large (2004-2006): Kim Cupit, Denton County Courthouse Museum

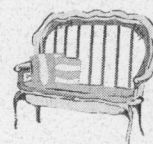
New Business

Megan reminded everyone to stop by the CMC booth in the exhibit hall. Megan then asked Shelby Sanett with Amigos Library Services to talk about a non-profit disaster recovery project, she then handed out a flyer for the project; (START) State Alliance for Response Task Force. The Chair then recognized Amy Fulkerson who is responsible for creating the new CMC listserv on Yahoo Groups.

Megan then handed out forms to submit CMC workshop ideas for 2005 and asked for everyone to submit suggestions for workshop topics. The chair also brought to everyone's attention, the Annual Meeting proposal forms that were in the Waco bags that were received upon registration. The Chair then recognized Kandy Taylor-Hille who made some recommendations for workshops, including materials identification and furnishings plans. The Chair then recognized Gabriela Truly who requested for everyone to present session ideas and to speak up for sessions that they would like to see presented at next year's TAM. The chair then recognized Lisa Rebori who is a representative of the TAM Program Committee. Lisa also asked that everyone submit ideas for sessions that they would like to attend at next year's TAM.

The Chair then opened the floor for discussion. Bill Allen of Henderson Phillips Fine Arts opened a discussion regarding ALI-ABA. Nathan Campbell of the McFaddin-Ward House made a suggestion that there be a workshop or session regarding furnishing plans. Amy Fulkerson informed everyone of an archivist convention that will be held in San Antonio this year.

The Chair then asked for a motion to adjourn. Amy Fulkerson and Gabriela Truly so moved. The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.



Megan then informed the group about the officer changes that had occurred during the year. Catherine Cambell who had been elected Secretary was unable to fill her term due to a professional

"I'm Dancing As Fast As I Can." The title of the TAM 2004 annual meeting had to have been taken from my personal life. Like most of us in the museum profession, I juggle my family, a house, pets, civic and church activities and a career that I love as the Collections Manager at the Battleship TEXAS in La Porte. Attending the annual meeting gives me the opportunity to get away and spend a few days with colleagues from across the state. I regain my perspective and obtain advice on how to keep all those plates spinning in the air from the well-planned sessions during the days and from old and new friends at the breaks and on the evening outings. I try not to miss a year, and thanks to the travel stipend that the Collections Manager Committee graciously provided to me this year, I was able to participate in this year's meeting in Waco. Thank you all!

In return for receiving the stipend, I was asked to write a review of a TAM session that pertains to the collections management field. There were a number of excellent sessions such as the mildew and mold session and of course, the full day workshop on marking collections was superb. The session that I have chosen was entitled, "Dancing with Dilemmas: Putting Ethics on Your Dance Card," chaired by Gary Smith. It examined a topic that I (and I suspect others) don't think about everyday. I've read the chapter on ethics in *The New Museum Registration Methods* and value AAM's recommendations, but I usually don't spend a great deal of time actively analyzing ethical dilemmas.

In this session, I was encouraged to take the time to do just that—think about the subject not only in the abstract, but as it affects museum professionals in the real world. The audience was divided into groups and each group was given a scenario to discuss. Museum collections played a prominent role in a number of the tricky situations. I have included the following "Scenario 2" as an example.

Scenario 2 De-Accessioning Dilemma

The X Museum has an artifact in its collection that no longer fits the mission of the museum. It has been properly de-accessioned and, according to the museum's collections policy, has now been offered as a donation to other museums. The collections policy explicitly states that no person working as a staff member or serving as a member of the board may acquire items that have been de-accessioned.

Unfortunately, no other museums were interested in the item. Now a member of the board of trustees that approved the de-accessioning has offered to purchase the item. In fact, she is insistent on acquiring the item. This trustee is not only a reliable annual donor, but she has a volatile temper and is used to getting her way. Everyone (except for the trustee wanting the item) feels awkward about this. But as this trustee points out, "What's the problem if we all agreed that the item does not belong in the collections, and no other museum wants it? This used to happen all of the time when we first founded the museum. There are lots of things in people's homes that used to be in the museum."

But as another trustee pointed out, this was before accreditation standards had been applied to the museum's collections policies.

What to do?

Each small group reported its resolution or resolutions of the situation to the full body. Most of the resolutions relied heavily on common sense and diplomacy, but the importance of having institutional policies already in place could not be stressed enough.

We were reminded that AAM is a wonderful resource for ethics information for all types of museum professionals.

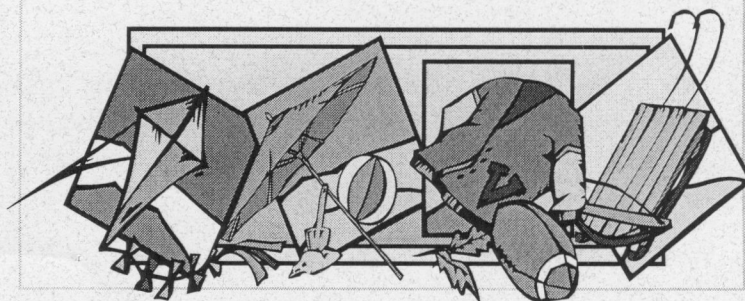
TAM Overview

by

*René L. Gonzales
Witte Museum*

I would like to start off by once again thanking the CMC officers for their generosity, without which I would not have been able to attend this year's TAM Annual Meeting in Waco. This was my second year at TAM, and it was great to see all the familiar faces again. As before I thoroughly enjoyed talking with other museum folk that have to deal with similar collection related issues. I tried to attend a variety of sessions that dealt with everything from lobbying and fundraising to educational interpretation and, of course, collection care. The session on Mold was extremely informative. A bit scary, but definitely relevant and useful. Last year's mold session dealt with structural and personnel issues, so this year it was good to hear about mold remediation techniques and precautions that directly affect collection objects.

The part of the Annual Meeting that I enjoyed the most was chairing the "Copyright in the Digital Age" session. At first I was worried that attendance at our session would have a limited audience, but when I saw how many people attended and how much the attendees participated in the discussion, I was gladly mistaken. For those who were not able to attend, you missed a light-hearted, yet eye opening presentation on the do's and don'ts of copyright law by patent attorney Wendy Buskop. Ms. Buskop explained the basics of protecting everything from photographs to artwork to museum catalogs to CD-ROMs as well as the processes involved with registering a copyright and the lifetime of a copyright. She also warned of the penalties that could result from infringing on the copyrights of other institutions or individuals. (If you would like more information on the Copyright session, I uploaded the outline on our new CMC Yahoo group) Overall, I was glad to be a part of presenting a topic that many of my fellow TAM and CMC members were as interested in as I was. I strongly encourage other CMC members to become involved in planning or chairing future sessions and/or workshops for next years meeting. If you feel strongly about a collection related issue or are eager to spread the word about new collection management techniques and practices, then it is definitely something you should strongly consider.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

\$15.00 yearly dues

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Please make checks payable to the Collection Managers Committee.
Send check and form to Rebecca Huffstutler, The Witte Museum,
3801 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78209



COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE OF
THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS



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