



COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE
Texas Association of Museums

Collections Communiqué

Autumn 2010

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Looking for a job?

TAM Job Bank

AAM Job Center

Have something for the next newsletter?

Email submissions by November 15, 2010, to Lisa Worley at worley.lisae@gmail.com.

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From the Chair

On August 6, Lindsey Richardson and I attended the TAM meeting to learn the development in the relationship between TAM and CMC. Not much was discussed, but it was declared that the affinity groups (CMC, TAMEC, etc.) are officially part of TAM. Regional groups will remain separate groups with their own non-profit status. What does this mean for our membership? Basically, it means that all members of CMC must be members of TAM, a requirement that CMC has always had, but loosely enforced. I am not sure what that means concerning institutional versus individual memberships. TAM is still working out all of the details, especially on the financial side. The CMC board will keep you updated, as soon we know more.

Kim Cupit

Preserving Oral Histories Workshop

Lindsey Richardson
Collection Manager
The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

CMC held an oral history workshop on Monday, August 16th at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza in Dallas. Fifteen

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attendees participated, and one became a new member:
welcome Carol Hanson of the Cedar Hill Museum of History!

We started the day with John Versluis, the Director of the Texas Heritage Museum at Hill College in Hillsboro. John gave us a rundown of the basic principles of collecting oral histories, including advice to be thorough in researching your topic and interviewee in advance of the interview, how to set up the interview, some useful tips for trying to keep the interview candidate on topic, and the importance of creating an outline and a transcript of the interview once it's done.

Our next speaker, Stephen Fagin, the Associate Curator at The Sixth Floor Museum, discussed the role of oral histories in a museum setting, using specific examples from The Sixth Floor Museum to demonstrate how oral histories can be incorporated in exhibits and programs. Stephen gave examples of how thoughtful collection of oral history interviews can have a direct effect on exhibit development: his most striking example was of an interview conducted by The Sixth Floor Museum with a man wearing a black and white patterned shirt, seated in a kitchen with floral wallpaper and a brightly colored table cloth. Although the man had an interesting story, the visual impact of the recorded interview was so busy and distracting that it could never be used in an exhibit. Stephen mentioned that several interviews had been redone over the years, in order to capture a more professional looking interview for exhibit purposes.

From the Dallas Historical Society, the next speaker, Curator of Education Dealey Campbell, gave us an overview of a fascinating grant-funded project at the DHS that allowed students from local schools to learn how to conduct oral histories. The students learned interview techniques and how the cameras worked, and then conducted oral histories on behalf of the DHS with elderly neighborhood residents about the history of the State Fair. Dealey's overview was full of interesting details and stories – apparently the middle school students like to conduct interviews on their own, but the high school students preferred to work in

groups. It was clear that all participants – DHS, students and interviewees – really enjoyed the experience and learned a great deal from it.

After a break for lunch and time to visit The Sixth Floor Museum's exhibits and new Reading Room, the workshop resumed. As the Collections Manager for The Sixth Floor Museum, I gave a very brief description of the way we catalogue oral histories here, how we track and store them, and what our goals are for digitization of the oral history collection.

Elinor Mazé, Senior Editor at the Baylor University Institute for Oral History, spoke to us about the ways that Baylor digitizes their oral history collection and some of the different types of analog technologies they have to work with for preservation. Baylor focuses almost exclusively on audio recordings, so these details were strictly about reel-to-reel and cassette recordings. Elinor gave us a lot of information about specific types of materials and equipment for digitization projects of different scales.

We closed the day with an activity and a program. First, J. Rhett Rushing of the Oral History Program at the Institute for Texan Cultures in San Antonio led us through some small group discussions of hypothetical situations involving oral histories. We had some lively discussions about examples such as "What do you do if the person you are interviewing tells you about illegal behavior on their part?" and "What do you do if the person you interviewed contacts you the next day and asks you to destroy the interview?" There were a wide variety of responses to almost every question! Stephen Fagin then delivered a program called "Voices: An Oral History of November 22, 1963" which is one of the public programs featuring oral histories that we offer here at The Sixth Floor Museum.

Thanks to everyone who spoke and attended. It was a very full day, with lots of valuable material condensed into a short time. If anyone has questions about oral histories for any of the speakers, please contact me – I have contact details for all of the speakers

and will be happy to pass them on.

The Williamson Museum Photographic Collection Goes Online

Lisa E. Worley
Registrar
Carrabba Conservation, Inc.

In mid-August, The Williamson Museum made over 900 historic images, a significant portion of its photographic collections, available and searchable online using PastPerfect Online. To see the photographs, visit <http://williamson.pastperfect-online.com>.

Sam Rayburn House Museum Receives Curatorial Facility Certification

Anne Ruppert
Curator
Sam Rayburn House Museum

The Sam Rayburn House Museum recently became certified by the Texas Historical Commission (THC) as part of the Curatorial Facility Certification Program (CFCP). The CFCP is designed as a benchmark for those museums and historic sites that hold state-associated collections, such as archaeological materials owned by the THC. Standards involving the museum's collections policy, procedures, storage facility, storage environment, governance and staffing are evaluated as part of the certification process. Those sites that meet the standards are allowed to continue to retain state-associated collections.

Working with the CFCP Coordinator, Elizabeth Martindale, the Sam Rayburn House Museum staff completed the three portions of the certification process—application, self-evaluation, and the field review. During the July 30, 2010 quarterly meeting in Austin, the THC voted to approve the museum for certification.

The benefits of certification include accountability for state-associated collections, updates to policies and procedures, acts as a benchmark for future performance, focuses the museum on its mission and scope of collections, as well as enhancing staff

teamwork. The Sam Rayburn House Museum retains the certification for 10 years, after which the site will re-apply for renewal to the certification.

The Sam Rayburn House Museum is located at 890 W. State Hwy. 56 in Bonham, Texas. For more information contact anne.ruppert@thc.state.tx.us or find us on the web at www.visitsamrayburnhouse.com.

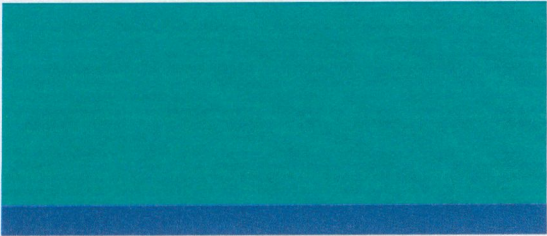
Heritage Preservation: 2011 Conservation Assessment Program

Eligibility: Any not-for-profit museum that cares for and owns or uses tangible objects, exhibits them on a regular basis, is open to the public at least 90 days annually, has at least one full-time paid or volunteer staff person or the equivalent, and is located in one of the 50 states of the Union, the District of Columbia, or U.S. territories is eligible to apply.

All types of museums may participate: aquariums; arboreta, botanical gardens and nature centers; art museums/centers; children's museums; historic houses and sites; history, science and natural history museums; science technology centers and planetariums; specialized museums; and zoos. Institutions with fully surveyed living animal collections (such as those accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association) may use CAP to assess the conservation needs of their non-living collections only.

CAP is designed to serve only those museums whose collections and facilities can be assessed in a two-day period. Museums whose collections and/or facilities cannot be surveyed within two days should apply for a general conservation survey grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Conservation Project Support program.

Deadline Information: The 2011 application booklet will be mailed in October to institutions on the CAP application mailing list and will also be posted online at



<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP/application.html>. To be added or verify your address on the mailing list, please contact the CAP staff at cap@heritagepreservation.org or call 202-233-0800.